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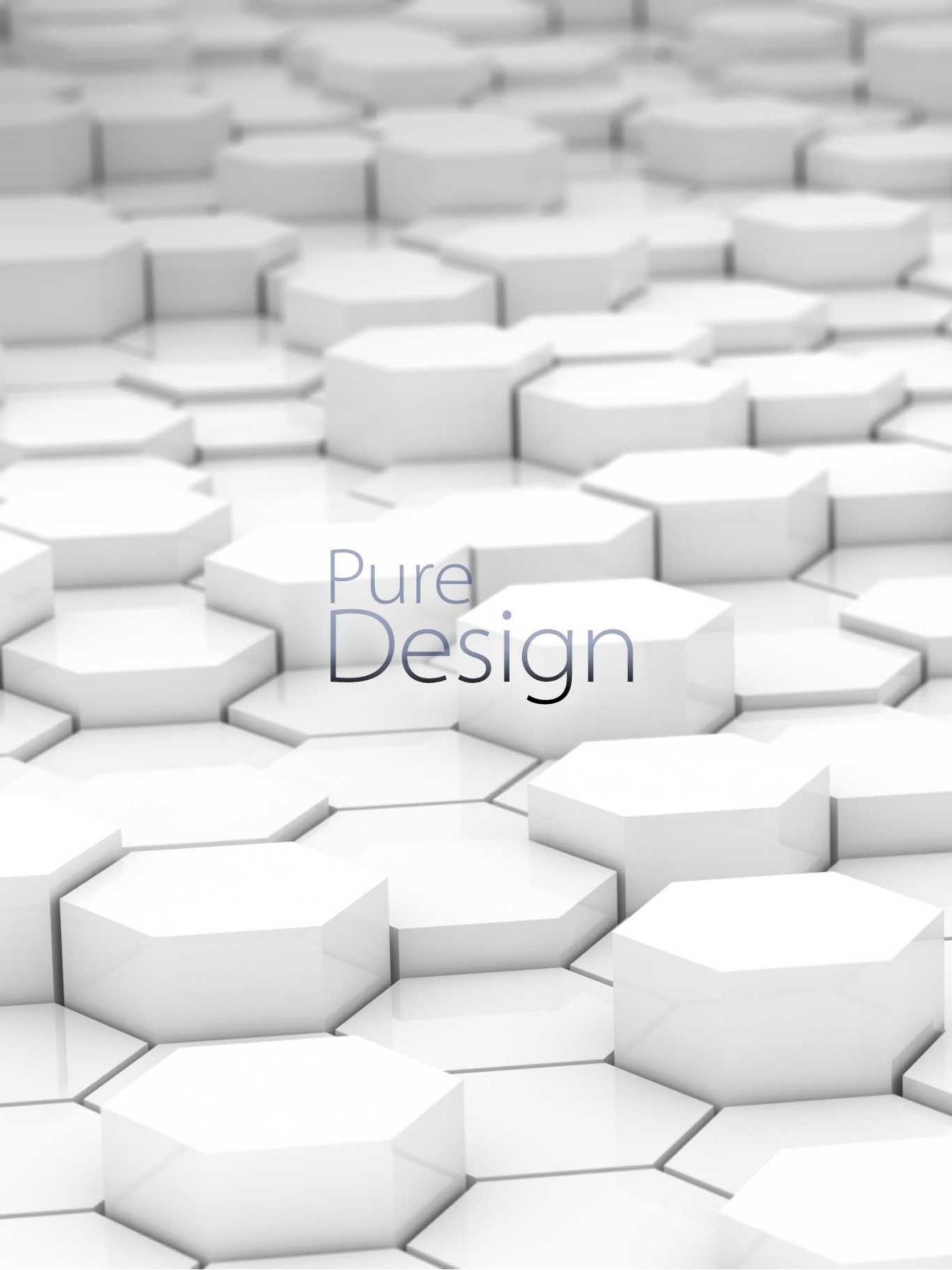
DAVID BOWIE

THE IMMORTAL BLACKSTAR

CES 2016

4K TVS, VIRTUAL REALITY, DRONES... OH MY!



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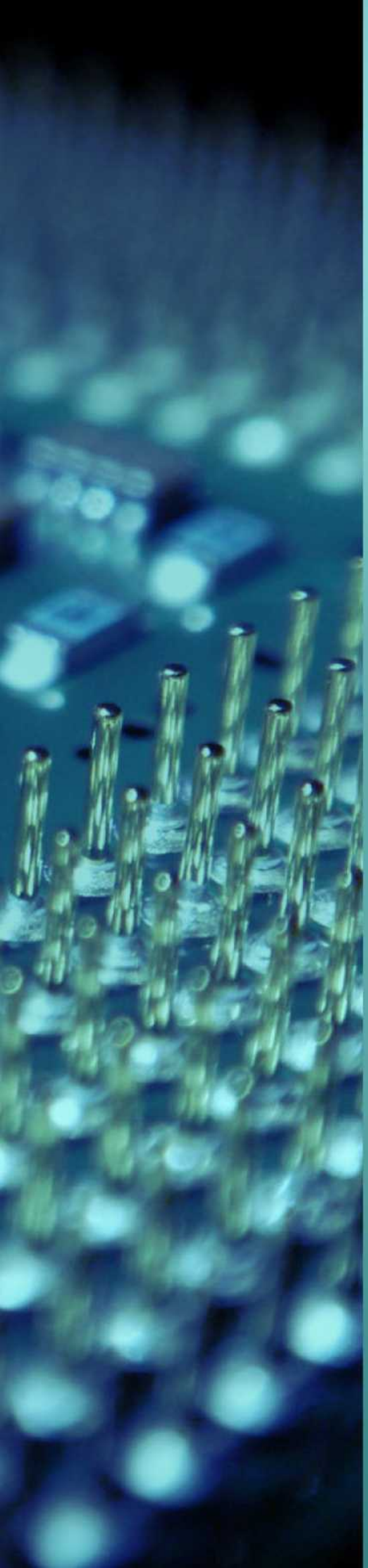

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Stardust" was a concept album that imagined a rock star from outer space trying to make his way in the music world. The persona - the red-headed, eyeliner wearing Stardust - would become an enduring part of Bowie's legacy, and a touchstone for the way entertainers packaged themselves for years to come.

Bowie's birthday was Friday, the same day as he released his new album, "Blackstar."

A statement on social media asked fan's to respect the family's privacy. No more details were provided.

Born David Jones in London, the singer came of age in the early 1970s glam rock era. He had a striking androgynous look in his early days and was known for changing his appearance and sounds. After "Ziggy Stardust," the stuttering rock sound of "Changes" gave way to the disco soul of "Fame," co-written with John Lennon, to a droning collaboration with Brian Eno in Berlin that produced "Heroes."

He had some of his biggest successes in the early 1980s with the bombastic "Let's Dance," and a massive American tour. Another one of his definitive songs was "Under Pressure," which he recorded with Queen; Vanilla Ice would years later infamously use the song's hook for his smash hit "Ice Ice Baby."

"My entire career, I've only really worked with the same subject matter," Bowie told The Associated Press in a 2002 interview. "The trousers may change, but the actual words and subjects I've always chosen to write with are things to do with isolation, abandonment, fear and anxiety - all of the high points of one's life."

Bowie lived in West Berlin in the late 1970s and Mayor Michael Mueller said Monday that "Heroes" became "the hymn of our then-divided city and its longing for freedom."

Germany's Foreign Ministry added Bowie was "now among heroes" and thanked him for "helping to bring down the wall."

Bowie's performance of "Heroes" was also a highlight at a concert for rescue workers after the 2001 World Trade Center attacks.

"What I'm most proud of is that I can't help but notice that I've affected the vocabulary of pop music. For me, frankly, as an artist, that's the most satisfying thing for the ego," Bowie said.

He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1996, but he didn't attend the ceremony. Madonna accepted for him and recounted how a Bowie concert changed her life when she attended it as a teenager. David Byrne, of the art rockers Talking Heads, inducted Bowie and said he gave rock music a necessary shot in the arm.

"Like all rock 'n' roll, it was visionary, it was tasteless, it was glamorous, it was perverse, it was fun, it was crass, it was sexy and it was confusing," Byrne said.

Bowie kept a low profile in recent years after a reported heart attack in the 2000s. He made a moody album three years ago called "The Next Day" - his first recording in a decade. "Blackstar," which earned positive reviews from critics, represented yet another stylistic shift, as he gathered jazz players to join him.

"David always did it his way and his way was the least obvious way," said Tony Visconti, Bowie's longtime producer. "He was a true genius who proved it over and over again through groundbreaking albums."

Bowie released a music video on Friday for the new song "Lazarus," which shows a frail Bowie lying in bed and singing the track's lyrics. The song begins with the line: "Look up here, I'm in heaven."

On the U.S. iTunes albums chart, which updates frequently throughout the day to reflect digital purchases from users, Bowie's "Blackstar" peaked at No. 1 on Monday. "Best of Bowie" was No. 2, and two other Bowie albums reached the Top 10.

His music has also been electrifying audiences this winter in New York in the sold-out new off-Broadway musical "Lazarus," led by Michael C. Hall of "Dexter" fame and inspired by the 1963 science-fiction novel "The Man Who Fell to Earth."

Tributes poured in for the singer after the announcement of his death. British astronaut Tim Peake tweeted about his sadness from outer space aboard the International Space Station, saying "his music was an inspiration to many."

British Prime Minister David Cameron tweeted that Bowie's death is "a huge loss." He wrote he had grown up listening to and watching Bowie and called the singer a "master of reinvention" and a pop genius who kept on getting it right.

Rolling Stones singer Mick Jagger, in a statement, said Bowie was his inspiration and "a true original."

Image: Bryan Bedder

"He was wonderfully shameless in his work we had so many good times together," Jagger said. " He was my friend. I will never forget him."

Former Beatle Paul McCartney has also paid tribute, calling Bowie "a great star."

"His music played a very strong part in British musical history," McCartney wrote on his website.

Bowie felt uneasy about some of his greatest material, once embarking on a "greatest hits" tour saying it would be the last time performing much of his old material. He later relented, however.

"I'm not a natural performer," he said in the 2002 interview. "I don't enjoy performing terribly much. Never have. I can do it and, if my mind's on the situation, do it quite well. But five or six shows in, I'm dying to get off the road and go back into the studio."

Bowie was married twice, to actress and model Mary Angela "Angie" Barnett from 1970-80, and to supermodel Iman since 1992. He had two children - Duncan Jones and Alexandria Zahra Jones - one with each wife.

The two-time Grammy Award winner was remembered by The Recording Academy as a ""Renaissance man and visionary artist."

"He is remembered and celebrated today for his audacious approach to pushing creative boundaries and ability to reinvent himself time and time again, changing the course of pop music in the process. ... His art will live on forever."

DAVID BOWIE NEVER STOPPED LOOKING AHEAD

It was hardly a coincidence that David Bowie named his greatest hits collection "Changes."

Bowie changed musical styles, fashion, even his name - he was born David Jones - in a relentless exploration of the artistic muse. More than any one sound or song, that shark-like ability to keep moving forward defined him.

Even his exit was an artistic statement. He released a striking video last week for his new song, "Lazarus," that depicts him in an institutional bed, his eyes covered in gauze.

"Look up here, I'm in heaven," he sings in the song's opening. A thin Bowie also appears dressed in a bodysuit that seems left over from the "Ziggy Stardust" years, retreating to a closet at the song's end. The song, like the elegaic "Where Are We Now?" from 2013, has him confronting issues of mortality in haunting fashion.

We just never knew how close the end was. When it came on Sunday, Bowie had long since retreated from public view after a reported heart attack in the mid-2000s. He'd released no new music for a decade before 2013 and the subsequent "Blackstar," released Friday. He gave no interviews in his last decade, and kept his 18-month cancer fight private.

Bowie quite literally seemed from another world in his early years. "The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars" was a concept album about an alien bisexual rock star. With his makeup and orange hair, Bowie participated fully in an era of excess.

The splendid songs poured out in the 1970s: "Changes," "Starman," "Suffragette City," "Jean Genie," "Rebel Rebel," "Young Americans." He wrote Mott the Hoople's best-known song, "All the Young Dudes."

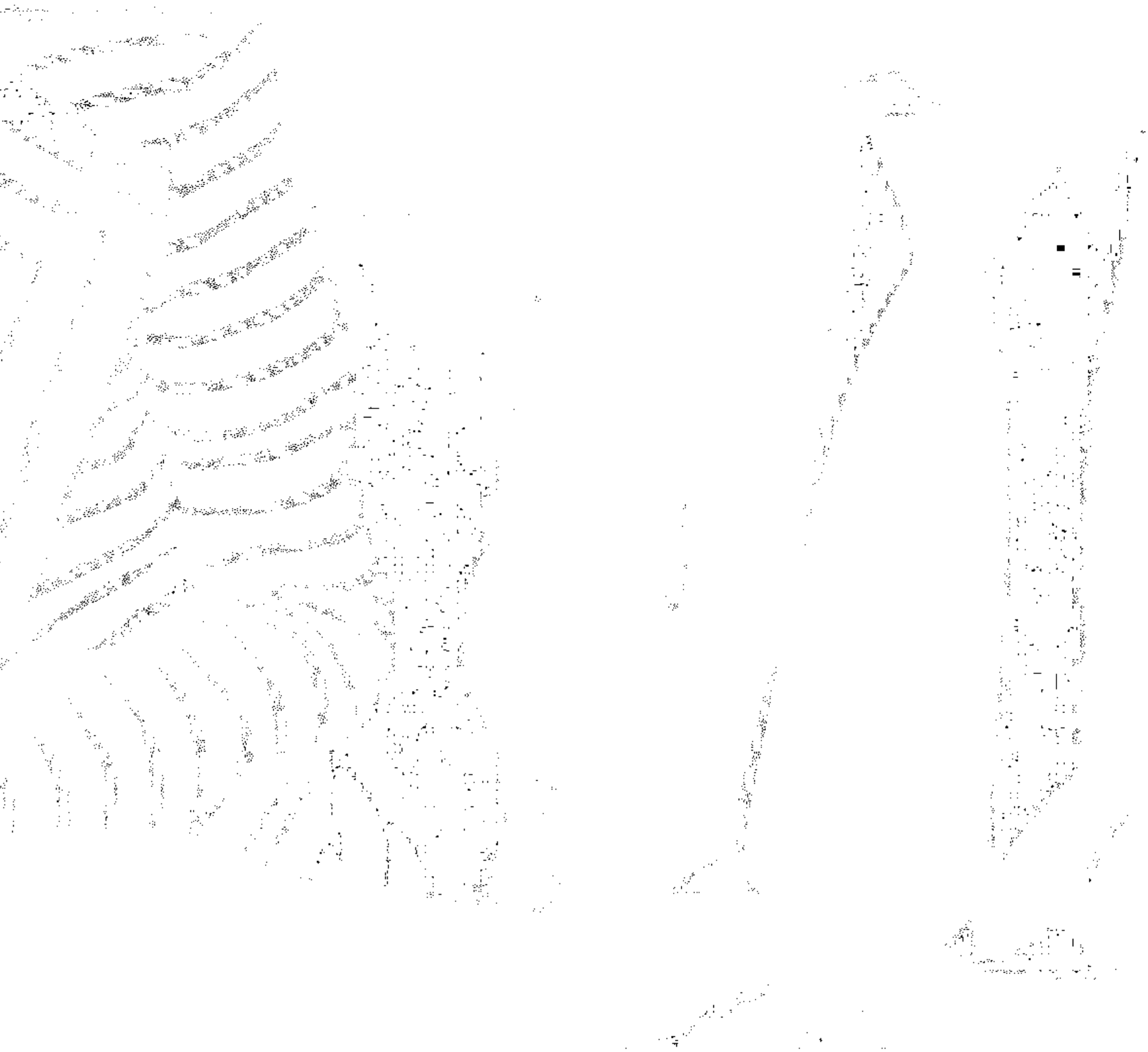
The bodysuit ultimately proved confining. Bowie wasn't the first artist to make stylistic shifts, but few did it with such aplomb. He delved into blue-eyed soul with his John Lennon collaboration, "Fame." He moved to Berlin to explore a minimal, industrial sound with collaborator Brian Eno. And in the mid-1980s era of Big Albums, Bowie appeared in a smart suit with the invitation, "Let's Dance."

That album, which also included the hits "Modern Love" and "China Girl," really marked the end of his mainstream success. Bowie kept moving, even if not all his explorations were rewarding; his 1990s band Tin Machine produced some unlistenable noise. The restlessness left him with a conflicted relationship with his old hits. He vowed to retire them after the 1990 "Sound and Vision" tour, but didn't stick to that and performed them with grace and enthusiasm on tour a decade later.

He was soft-spoken with a very British politeness in our only meeting, a 2002 interview where he allowed himself a brief flash of pride.

"What I'm most proud of is that I can't help but notice that I've affected the vocabulary of pop music," he said then. "For me, frankly, as an artist, that's the most satisfying thing for the ego."

Everyone touched by Bowie's music takes their own moment of inspiration. Kurt Cobain covered "The Man Who Sold the World" with Nirvana. Vanilla Ice repurposed Bowie's



collaboration with Queen, "Under Pressure," into his biggest hit.

Personally, two recordings from 1977 will always stick out. One was Bowie's duet with Bing Crosby, made for a television special filmed just five weeks before Crosby's death. Crosby sang "The Little Drummer Boy," while Bowie sang "Peace on Earth" in counterpoint.

The culture clash made it an immediate classic - the World War II era crooner with one of rock's wildest personalities. It was hard to imagine them in the same room, let alone standing around a piano. Yet neither man looked down upon the other. Its beauty made the collaboration last, and it is heard every December.

That same fall, Bowie released "Heroes" from his sessions with Eno. The song starts quietly, Bowie singing over a droning, repetitive guitar figure, building gradually in intensity as his voice rises and he sings of a memorable but brief love affair. It's a moment of majesty that never fails provoke chills.

"We can be heroes," he sings, "just for one day."

David Bowie had more than a day.

DAVID BOWIE HELD POWERFUL INFLUENCE ON FASHION DESIGN

David Bowie - with his outrageous alter egos - was famed as much for his image and powerful influence on fashion design as he was for his music.

From the much-copied lightning flash face paint of Aladdin Sane, the oversize shoulders and white shirt collars of "Thin White Duke" to the trilby hat and floppy fringe of the alien he played in the movie "The Man Who Fell to Earth," Bowie for decades boldly broke boundaries in style and gender with his influential looks.

Then there was, of course, 1972's flame-orange haired Ziggy Stardust - his most recognizable invention.

Image: Peter Dejong

While Bowie died of cancer at age 69 on Sunday after just having released a new album, he is as alive and young as ever on the high fashion catwalks.

Bowie "was a great artist and a timeless fashion icon... who will remain a reference," Chanel designer Karl Lagerfeld told The Associated Press.

Such was Bowie's unique style that by 1992, when he married Somali-American fashion model Iman, his "relationship to fashion had already been sealed long before," according to prominent fashion blogger Diane Pernet.

Some observers say that only Lady Gaga has come as close as Bowie did in seamlessly merging pop music and fashion.

Jean Paul Gaultier, Dior, Saint Laurent and Dries Van Noten and fashion-conscious actresses such as Tilda Swinton all owe Bowie a lot. The check list includes bold hair color, sometimes slicked back, golden makeup, high shoulders, space themes, wide lapels on big monochrome or yellow jackets or sheeny playsuits with a deep cleavage.

Trends in recent seasons have turned the clocks back to the glam rock of the 1970s and '80s - a Bowie signature.

A recent Gaultier ready-to-wear show in Paris entitled "Rock Stars" paid homage to the man by recreating Ziggy Stardust on model Hannelore Knuts - who donned a one-legged, star encrusted net catsuit to applause from guests.

Gaultier told The Associated Press Monday that "personally he inspired me by his creativity, his extravagance, his sense of fashion that he was constantly reinventing, by his allure, his elegance and his androgyny."

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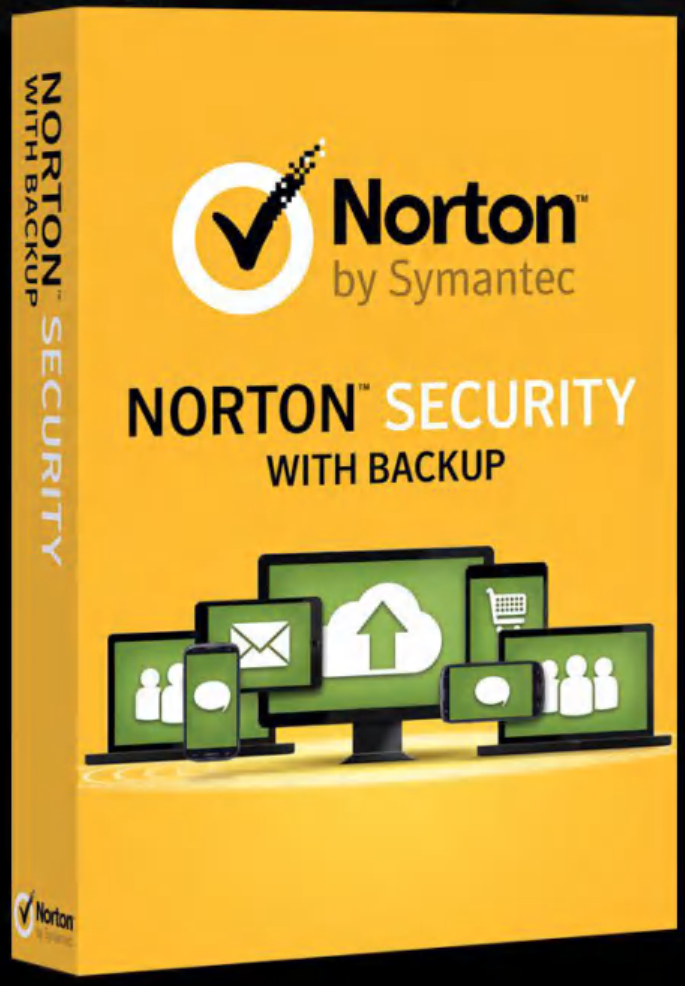

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TESLA SOFTWARE UPDATE ALLOWS SELF-PARKING, LIMITS SPEED

Some Tesla Motors vehicles can park themselves without a driver inside with a software update beamed to customers over the weekend.

The update also puts new speed limits on Tesla's semi-autonomous Autopilot mode and makes several enhancements, including automatically slowing when the car is approaching a curve and keeping the car in its lane even when the lane markings are faded.

CEO Elon Musk said the parking feature is a "baby step" toward his eventual goal: Letting drivers summon their self-driving, self-charging cars from anywhere using their phones.

"I actually think, and I might be slightly optimistic on this, within two years you'll be able to summon your car from across the country," Musk said on a conference call with reporters. "This is the first little step in that direction."

For now, though, the system isn't truly autonomous.

"It's more like remote-control parking," Musk said.

Owners must line up their Model S sedan or Model X SUV within 33 feet of the space they want it to drive or back into. They must then stand within 10 feet and direct the car to park itself using the key fob or Tesla's smartphone app. The car can also exit the spot when the driver summons it. If it's going into a home garage, it can also open and close the garage door.

Tesla says the system is helpful for tight parking spots, but cautions that it should only be used on private property since it can't detect every potential obstacle. The car could hit bikes hanging from a garage ceiling, for example.

Image: James Lipman

The software update also puts new speed limits on Tesla's semi-autonomous mode. The car will now only drive at or slightly above the speed limit when the Autopilot mode is being used on residential roads and on roads without a center divider. If the car enters such an area in Autopilot mode, it will automatically slow down.

Musk said he's not aware of any accidents caused when a Tesla was driving in Autopilot mode, but he thinks the change won't be a problem for owners.

"On roads without a center divider, where there's potential for a more serious collision, it makes sense not to go more than five miles per hour above the speed limit," he said.

The updates will go into about 60,000 vehicles, including Model S sedans made after September 2014 and the new Model X SUV.

PSG ASKS RAP ARTIST MIA TO STOP USING ITS BRAND AND SPONSORS

Paris Saint-Germain is threatening rap artist M.I.A. with legal action if the singer does not stop using the French soccer club's image in a video clip for her song "Borders."

In the video describing the ordeal of refugees, the British musician, whose real name is Mathangi Arulpragasam, is seen wearing a PSG shirt emblazoned with the club's logo and its jersey sponsor, whose slogan has been changed to "Fly Pirates."

On her Twitter account, M.I.A. published a letter written in December by PSG deputy CEO Jean-Claude Blanc to her label Universal Music asking "to cease the broadcasting" of images showing the PSG jersey and to refrain from using the club's image.

Blanc wrote that the club "had the unpleasant surprise" to find out that M.I.A appeared twice wearing the PSG shirt "bearing the very easily recognizable logo Paris Saint-Germain and our sponsors' brands (Nike and QNB), and the brand of our sponsor Emirates."

The PSG communication department told The Associated Press on Monday it wants to protect its image as well as its sponsors and says no legal action has been taken so far.

Blanc explained in his letter that the club did not understand why it was associated with a denunciation of the migrants' treatment in their journey across the sea toward Europe.

"This association is all the more hard to understand that nothing in our activities and in our daily initiatives suggests we have anything to do with the problems highlighted by M.I.A." Blanc wrote.

Blanc noted that the French champions made a donation of 1 million euros ($1.12 million) to the United Nations' refugee agency and a French non-profit association to help relieve the migrant crisis last September.

"We consider that the use of our brand and image in a video clip denouncing the treatment of refugees is a source of discredit for our club and distorts its public communication policy," Blanc added.

In his formal notice to Universal Music, PSG also asked the music company "to compensate us for the harm we have suffered."

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A CES WITH SOME GENUINELY REALISTIC TECHNOLOGIES

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ALL OF THE FUN OF THE 2016 CONSUMER ELECTRONICS SHOW

If you follow the world of electronics and technology even vaguely, then you will almost certainly know about the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) - and what you can typically expect from it. Every January at the Las Vegas Convention Center in Nevada, the world's press hacks have their minds thoroughly boggled by all manner of outlandish new ideas and developments - although this year, those developments were perhaps less dramatic and more grounded than usual.

What do we mean by that? Well, CES is a show with a long history of showcasing certain revolutionary new technologies to the public for the first time.

From the videocassette recorder (VCR) in 1970 and the camcorder and Compact Disc (CD) player in 1981, right through to the Plasma TV in 2001 and the Blue-ray disc in 2003, if there's a piece of consumer technology that you depend on in your home or while 'out and about', in all likelihood, it first turned up in some primitive form at CES.

Image: David Paul Morris

CES 2016: MORE REFINEMENT THAN REVOLUTION

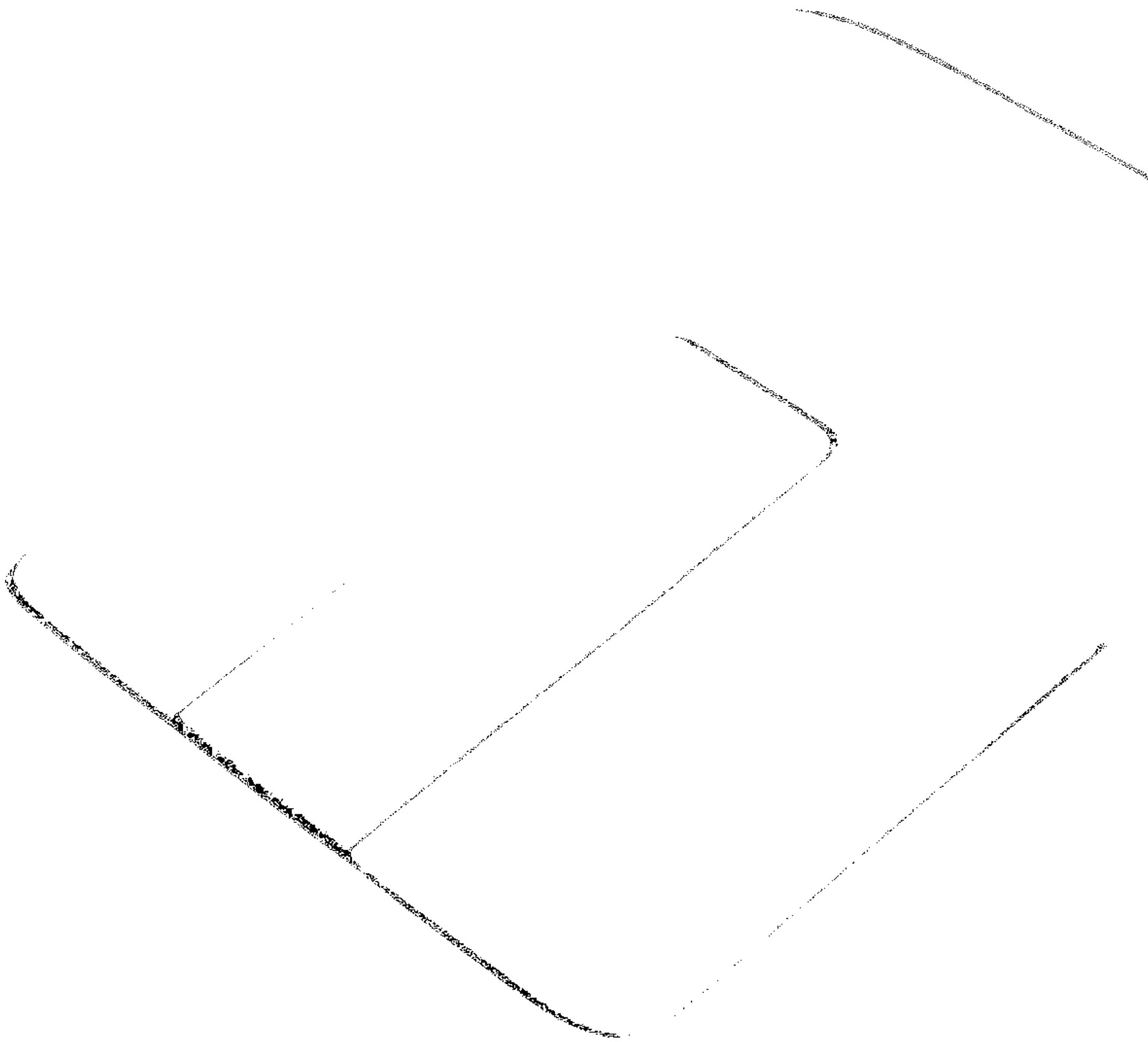
Those expecting to see something truly revelatory that they had never even thought of before were likely disappointed by CES 2016. However, they certainly shouldn't have been. The **more than 3,600 companies hogging some 2.4 million square feet of space in the Nevada venue** largely concentrated on refined versions of tech that we were already familiar with, and it was an all-the-more exciting show for precisely that.

The four days of the show - from January 6-9 - certainly weren't uncool or boring ones. We got to see, for example, the unveiling of an LG rollable display - yes, that's right, a screen that can be rolled up like a newspaper, thanks to the use of a malleable plastic material in place of the traditional glass substrate. It seems that this functionality isn't a mere gimmick either, with LG hinting at the display's use in future devices that are capable of extending or contracting their footprint, depending on what they are used for.

Another of the slightly less conventional technologies on display at CES 2016 was a hydrogen fuel cell charger - the first to become widely available to consumers - by Swedish startup MyFC. The idea of this device, called the Jaq, is to give you true power autonomy, allowing you to keep your smartphone charged with no dependence on the power grid. You insert a water and salt cartridge into the device to access 1,800mAh of current, and if you need more, you just keep sliding in more.

It's all very simple, and it's all 100% clean energy too, **with MyFC promising that even the cartridges will be fully recyclable in the future**.

LG Display



LOADS OF USEFUL AND AFFORDABLE TECH TO BE THRILLED BY

Those little gems aside, you could be forgiven for experiencing a lot of deja vu at the latest running of CES - but you can rest assured that this is definitely a good thing. For example, huge TVs delivering loads of pixels have been a mainstay of CES for years now, but it's only now that many of them are finally looking like the kind of devices that you could actually afford to buy.

TCL, for instance, **showed off a 4K Ultra HD TCL Roku TV and something called TCL TV+,** which it said "combines the latest display and acoustic processing technology with incredible interactive features such as multi-media sharing, smart remote control and the electronic program guide." 4K content seems to be seriously ramping up too, amid expectations that **DirecTV will start broadcasting in 4K later this year** and **Sony will soon begin supporting Dolby Atmos in its 4K Blu-rays**.

Throw in the highly elegant Huawai Watch models, the Elegant and Jewel, the MediaPad M2 10 from the same manufacturer - this 10-inch tablet boasting an aluminium build and sandblasted metal finish - and the LeTV Le Max Pro, the world's first smartphone to be powered by the Snapdragon 820, and it's clear that CES 2016 really did showcase some very exciting improvements to past tech.

One could also mention the likes of the **Lenovo Yoga mouse and remote control**, Hyundai's virtual car owner's manual, Recon's Snow2 ski goggles (yes, even ski goggles are benefitting from 'smart' technology now) and Kodak's back-

htc

to-the-future, "next generation" Super 8 camera as examples of how long-established tech was utilised to new and enthralling ends at CES 2016.

BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE WE HAVEN'T MENTIONED...

What important things haven't we cited yet? Perhaps the L'Oreal My UV Patch that monitors your exposure to the sun, developed by MC10, which is also working on a medical monitor called the BioStamp? Or maybe **the latest amazing advancements in virtual reality (VR) headsets**, with HTC and Oculus exhibiting especially consumer-ready models providing a much more realistic experience?

These are all developments that could help to make a big impact on our lives in years to come, but we reckon that if there was one trend above all else that made CES 2016 special, it was the continued rise of the drone. No longer does remote-controlled aircraft seem an unlikely or impossible fantasy, as shown by such models as the Parrot Disco drone, which incorporates a single-propeller, one-directional flight pattern and design, and the Yuneec Typhoon H, its use of Intel's depth-sensing optics enabling its accurate evaluation and avoidance of obstacles.

Even these amazing drones, however, were overshadowed by one reportedly capable of carrying a human. That drone was the Ehang 184, built by the Chinese UAV company Ehang. The company was only established in 2014, but boasted that the machine on display at CES represented the future of personal transportation. Although Ehang uses the term "autonomous aerial vehicle", you might prefer

EHANG 184 Launch Video from CES2016

to call it a pilotless helicopter or a driverless car for the skies. The manufacturer has said that **this all-electric quadcopter is capable of carrying a single passenger up to 10 miles, or approximately 23 minutes of flight**.

Beyond **a nice demonstration video**, there isn't a huge amount of proof right now that the Ehang 184 is really as capable as the manufacturer claims, with no human having been seen flying inside one yet - although Ehang does at least have the excuse that the quadcopter has not yet been tested or approved as airworthy by the FAA. The firm has claimed that the machine has successfully flown in China, but with the video not appearing to show a human in said aircraft, we'll just have to take them at their word.

WHY DRONES COULD BE THE STARS OF THE FUTURE

With so little proof yet that the Ehang 184 is a real working drone for transporting humans, big questions have understandably been asked about its safety - but perhaps of most significance is that we are at the stage of asking such questions at all. Although TechCrunch writer Fitz Tepper speculated that **"the company probably was using the 184 as more of a marketing exercise for their standard-sized drones like the Ghost"**, we could still be entering an exciting new era of transportation.

Just imagine, within 5-8 years, having your own form of flying personal transportation, with spots in which to land and take off drones in major cities around the world. Imagine not having any controls in front of you, but instead

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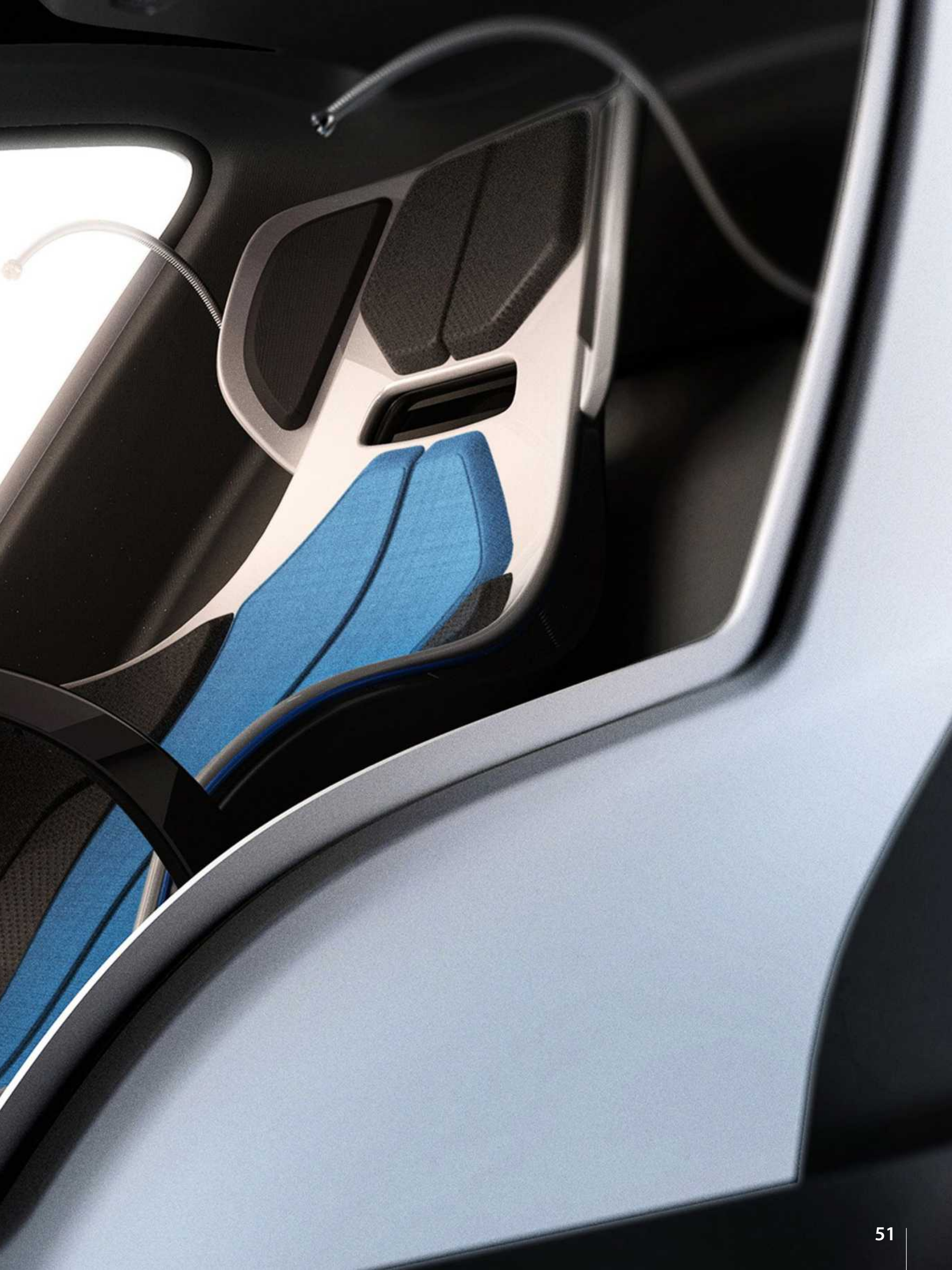

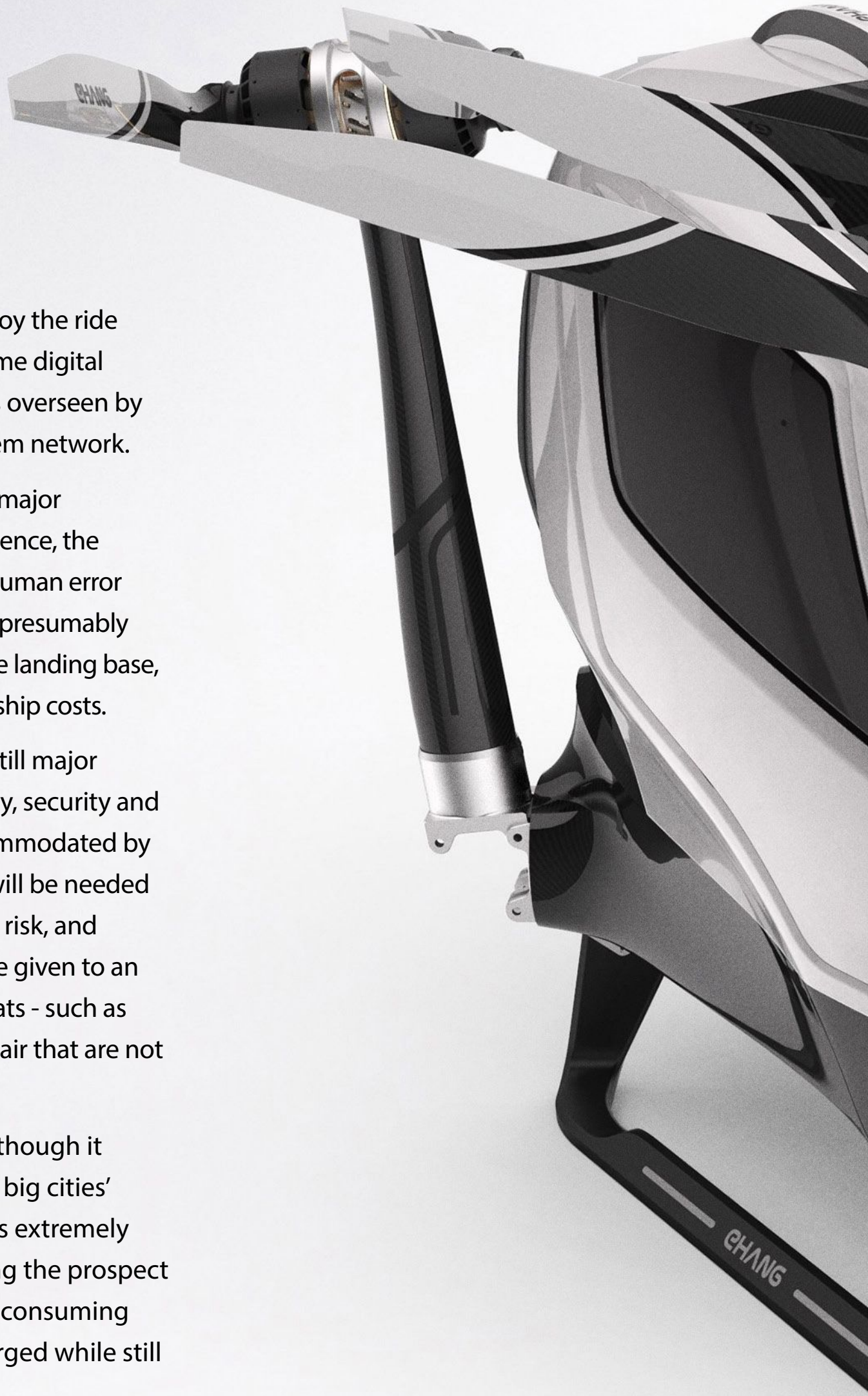

being able to just sit back and enjoy the ride - perhaps taking advantage of some digital entertainment - as your journey is overseen by an automated management system network.

Such drones could certainly bring major advantages, such as sheer convenience, the elimination of crashes caused by human error and reduced travel costs - you will presumably be able to charge your drone in the landing base, and there may not even be ownership costs.

But on the other hand, there are still major questions to be asked about safety, security and how such machines may be accommodated by the regulations. A rotor solution will be needed that does not put people's lives at risk, and much thought will also need to be given to an appropriate velocity and the threats - such as birds - that may be present in the air that are not so applicable to roads.

Fly range is another big factor, although it helps in this regard that so many big cities' downtown areas lend themselves extremely well to short flying periods, raising the prospect of human-sized drones with fast-consuming batteries that can be quickly charged while still delivering high power.

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KEEP AN EYE ON CES 2017, 2018, 2019...

So much uncertainty still prevails around the subject of drones for human transportation, although the latest developments at CES 2016 have at least helped to make the picture a little clearer. It all suggests - at least if the trend of other technological areas at this year's event is anything to go by - that we could be seeing, hearing and reading much more about drones for human beings at future CES runnings.

When and if such new developments break, we will be the first to let you know! ■

by Benjamin Kerry & Gavin Lenaghan

CES
Consumer
Technology
Association
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Image: Rick Wilking

CES 2016: DEVICES CONNECT US FROM THE CRIB TO OLD AGE

Umbilical cord? These days, it's more like a USB cord.

Whether in the womb or in one's twilight years, our lives are becoming ever more connected. Nowhere has that been more evident than at the annual CES gadget show in Las Vegas, where everything from pregnancy tests to beds to dog bowls now come with apps at the ready, collecting valuable data along the way.

Some offer solutions; others think they're "smart." One starts at the very beginning: life itself.

Image: Creatas Images

BLUETOOTH FOR BABIES

Until now, that three-minute wait for a home pregnancy-test result comes with no built-in distraction beyond staring at the stick to see if one line or two is fading in. No longer. First Response will start selling a Bluetooth-enabled test in the spring that links with a woman's smartphone, recommending BuzzFeed quizzes and videos or health-related articles to pass the time while a clock ticks down the seconds to her result.

The test, which could cost $14.99 or $21.99 depending on the retailer, also claims to tailor itself to the test-taker from the very first yes or no question: Do you want to have a baby? And it doesn't stop once the test is done, as it can track a potential due date, add that to a woman's phone calendar and offer to share the news with selected friends and relatives via email or text.

MAN'S BEST BLUETOOTH-ENABLED FRIEND

Call it torture or training, but the creators behind Clever Pet hope their $299 light-up dog dish can teach critical thinking to canines. The bowl dishes out portions of food if the pet paws at the correct light; if all goes well, it might eventually train them not to inhale a bowl of food all at once.

The company created several games with the lights that get progressively more difficult the better the dog gets at winning the food. The dog's owner gets all the data.

"A persistent dog will always get food," said Philip Meyer, the company's product officer. "A motivated dog will get it faster."

SMART FRIDGE, SMART BED

No need to open the fridge door to know what's left inside. LG Electronics will let you peek through an opaque glass window that lights up from the inside with a tap, saving electricity and possibly preventing your next poor late-night-snack decision. With a different fridge, stocking up wouldn't require a grocery run; one from Samsung and Mastercard comes equipped with an installed ordering app in the appliance.

Another company contends you don't need a smart fridge to make yours a thinker. The company Smarter expects by summer to begin selling mats with sensors and in-fridge cameras that can remotely tell you what's left in your fridge. They'll set you back $130 to $150 each.

Making beds smarter is Beddit's goal. The company's thin belt-length sensors sold for $149 go under the sheet and are supposed to measure your heart rate, respiration and restless tossing and turning throughout the night.

WATERING DOWN THE WATER USE

Some gizmos promise easier ways to cut down on water use, particularly in drought-stricken areas. Nascent Objects' $100 Droppler is to water what the app Shazam is to music; it listens closely to the running water in a faucet to tell you how much you've likely used.

Oakland-based Edyn, which debuted a solar-powered soil moisture detector last year, introduced a $60 solar-powered water valve going on sale early this year. Its app-accompanied gadget will only water plants when they need it. A smart showerhead called Hydrao has lights that change from green to red the more water you use; of course, it also sends the data to an app.

BIG MOTHER

The mother hub is watching. Sen.se's Silver Mother hub, that is, which aims to help adult children or caregivers make sure that an elderly person living alone takes his or her pills, drinks enough water and goes about other daily routines.

The small plastic figure resembles a Russian nesting doll that can nudge seniors with some not-so-subtle hints - the sound of running water, for instance, might remind someone it's time to drink some water. It can also call in with recorded reminders that it's pill-taking time or send alerts to caregivers and loved ones if something seems awry.

For $290, you get the hub and four sensors you can program and monitor from an app.

IF YOU THINK DRONES ARE A PASSING FAD, BETTER THINK AGAIN

If you're used to thinking of drones as a passing fad, last week's CES gadget show should give you second thoughts.

Tiny, self-piloted copters promise to buzzily follow you around like something out of a Neal Stephenson cyberpunk novel. New drones that could find lost wilderness adventurers or help them see out above treetops; others purport to carry a human passenger at the touch of a button.

None of this, of course, will be happening overnight. Limited battery life means that many commercial models can't fly for more than about 20 minutes at best. Manufacturers haven't yet figured out the best way to keep many tiny drones where they ought to be, given that GPS positioning sucks too much power for their minuscule batteries. Obstacle avoidance systems that would let small drones pilot themselves are still under development. And looming over the entire field are new government rules intended to keep people safe, but which may also slow innovation.

Image: John Locher

So far, none of those obstacles are slowing down an industry that appears to be in full lift-off. The Consumer Technology Association estimates that U.S. consumer drone spending will more than double to $953 million next year. ABI Research believes the global market for drones will hit $8.4 billion in 2018, with users ranging from the military and oil companies to farmers, journalists, and backyard tinkerers.

As drone capabilities continue to grow, drones may become a mass-market product for average consumers in about three years, says Patrick Moorhead, principal analyst of research firm Moor Insights & Strategy.

"You should be able to get a drone that can effectively follow you, not run into things, and find things on its own," he says. "That's pretty cool."

That's assuming, of course, that you're not commuting to work in one. At CES, Chinese manufacturer Ehang Inc. unveiled a large drone that it said can carry a human passenger at speeds of up to 60 miles an hour. The four-armed quadcopter has been on more than 100 flights, mostly in wooded areas of Guangzhou, according to Chief Marketing Officer Derrick Xiong. Some - he didn't say how many - have carried a human passenger.

Federal aviation regulators declined to comment on Ehang's human-carrying drone, saying the company hasn't submitted any proposal to authorities. The Federal Aviation Administration advised an Ehang representative at the show to contact its unmanned aircraft system office.

In contrast with the bigger drones, smaller ones were also on display. On the small drone front, Kickstarter-funded Fleye envisions its camera-bearing flying sphere as a kind of personal videographer that follows you around street corners; you'll be able to switch between settings such as "selfie," "panorama" and "virtual tripod." And because it's encased in what looks like a lightweight football helmet, its propellers pose less risk to bystanders.

"Instead of doing collision detection and avoidance, we just make sure if it collides, it won't hurt," says CEO Laurent Eschenauer.

Toy drone maker Spin Master Inc. showed off an augmented-reality game in which kids use a real-life drone to rescue tiny virtual people, put out fires and fight aliens. In essence, they're interacting with a virtual world overlaid on the real world; they can see the virtual elements on a tablet they're using to control the drone.

Robolink Inc. wants you to learn how to program using its "CoDrone," a flying electronics kit you can instruct to jump off a table into someone's hand with a simple line of code. CEO Hansol Hong describes the educational product as "where Khan Academy meets drone."

But the reach of some small drones still exceeds their grasp. Companies like San Jose-based UNorth Inc., maker of the Mota; Newark, Delaware-based Onagofly; and South Korean ByRobot Co. all said they're still tweaking the system needed to make tiny drones weighing less than half a pound follow their owners.

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For instance, ByRobot co-founder James Hong said its engineers still need several months to modify the way its drone uses wireless Bluetooth and Wi-Fi signals. The changes should help maintain a reliable connection to the user's smartphone, making possible the "follow me" function in the absence of GPS, which the company considers too power-hungry for smaller drones.

With the potential for millions of new flying objects buzzing around the country in coming years, the FAA is working on new drone-safety rules. By this spring, the agency plans to unveil regulations to allow streamlined approval of commercial drone uses, instead of the case-by-case system it uses now. Last month, the FAA began requiring registration for drones weighing between about half a pound and 55 pounds.

Even as they come up with new rules, regulators don't know exactly where the technology is headed, FAA Administrator Michael Huerta acknowledged in a speech to CES attendees.

"This is not going to be a finite process, where one day we sit back and say OK, we're done," Huerta said in a speech Wednesday. "Maintaining the highest levels of safety requires us to constantly evolve in our approach."

KEITH URBAN PLANS OUT 2016 TOUR WHILE FINISHING ALBUM

Country star Keith Urban hasn't finished his forthcoming album, "RipCORD," but he's already planning a new arena and amphitheater tour in 2016.

The first leg of the RipCORD World Tour will start June 2 in Kansas City, Missouri, and run through Nov. 19 at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York, Urban announced Monday.

"I am anxious to get it done," he said in a phone interview with The Associated Press on his way into the studio to work on the album. "'Cause I hate the buildup of anything. If I could, I wouldn't talk about any of it. I would just put it out."

Urban has been teasing fans with little snippets of information for months. He's already put out two singles from the record, the Grammy-nominated "John Cougar, John Deere, John 3:16," and his second single, "Break on Me."

"I'd much rather have the record out six months before I tour," he said. "I certainly don't want to wait to tour because the record is not done already. I still think the record is going to be out before the tour, probably."

For "RipCORD," he's been working with a new crop of producers and musicians, including guitarist and producer Nile Rodgers, who won three Grammys for his work with Daft Punk on their hit album, "Random Access Memories."

"This last year was a lot of experimenting and working with a lot of different people, much like I did with 'Fuse,'" Urban said. "And so now it's just sort of distilling it down to the things that feel right and true."

Tour openers include country singer Brett Eldredge, who was the 2014 Country Music Association's new artist of the year, and newcomer Maren Morris, a 25-year-old Texas singer who is expected to release her debut album on the Columbia Nashville label this year.

Urban will have a busy 2016 with the new album, the tour and the final season of "American Idol," where he serves as a judge.

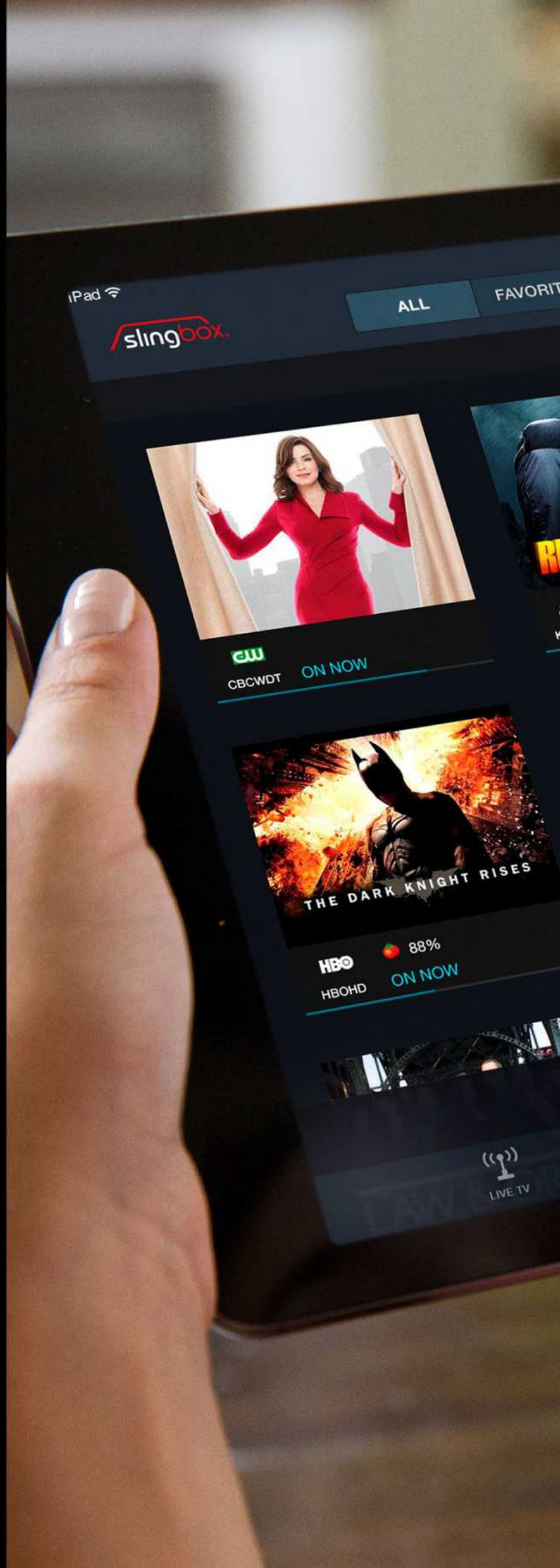
"I am going to miss it," he said of the singing competition. "There is nothing that has quite that feel on television where you can sit down and watch it with your whole family."

But he's optimistic about the new year.

"I feel really good about this year," Urban said. "And I hear that sentiment from a lot of other people. There's a lot of optimism from a lot of people who just want this to be a good year."

Online:
http://www.keithurban.net

REVIEW NEW WAYS TO GET CABLE WITHOUT AN UGLY CABLE BOX



Getting cable service no longer requires a technician who'll come and install an ugly cable box.

Instead, cable companies are starting to offer slimmed-down bundles of channels that you can stream to your TV over your Internet connection - sort of like Netflix, although mostly not as convenient.

Dish's Sling TV and Sony's PlayStation Vue paved the way with innovative online services nearly a year ago. Last fall, Comcast, Time Warner Cable and its buyer-in-waiting, Charter Communications, followed suit with their own online bundles.

These now represent the latest gambit from the quasi-monopolistic cable industry, which continues to shed TV customers as more people watch online video from a variety of new outlets. The bundles make good business sense, since cable companies save money on technician visits.

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FAMILY
SHOWS
MOVIES
SPORTS
All Genres
New
Popular
BONES
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FOX
FOXHD
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ON NOW
THE BIG BANG THEORY
WRECK-IT RALPH
GREY'S ANATOMY
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Today
Tonight
Coming Up
Now
SETTINGS
SEARCH
RECENTS
DETAILS
GUIDE
GALLERY

For customers, the new plans mean cheaper access to popular channels like NBC, ESPN and HBO, with no monthly fee for a cable box. The online services range from about $50 and up for Vue, which won't save you that much money, to $10 a month, before taxes and fees, for local networks from Time Warner Cable.

But channel selection is limited, and some services don't let you skip commercials or save shows to watch later, the way cable boxes do with digital video recorders. And there are hidden costs and annoyances.

IS IT FOR YOU

If you primarily watch live TV from a small group of popular channels and have broadband at home, you could save money on monthly charges and installation for a cable box.

You don't have to wait for new episodes to arrive on Hulu or Netflix. But this isn't a replacement for such services. Cable services won't give you access to original shows from the likes of Netflix or Amazon, and you can't binge-watch past seasons of network and premium-cable series.

Online cable bundles also probably aren't for rabid sports fans committed to a particular team, although they might satisfy you if you only watch a few football games a week. Sony's Vue has regional sports networks available, while Sling has sports and soccer bundles, each for $5 extra over the $20-a-month base price.

If aesthetics are important, going online won't clunk up a wall-mounted flat-screen TV as much as a cable box would.

Image: Anna Subbotina

WHO CAN GET IT

Sling is available nationwide. For Sony's Vue, you need a PlayStation or Amazon Fire TV gadgets and have to live in one of seven big cities.

Time Warner Cable, Charter and Comcast require you to subscribe to their Internet services - you're not, say, going to stream Comcast over Verizon's Fios. Their services are still being rolled out and are available only in certain areas. Time Warner's is only around New York City, while Comcast is in the Boston and Chicago areas. Charter has a streaming-only service in St. Louis; Madison, Wisconsin; and some other markets.

SETTING IT UP

Pretty easy. Comcast, Sony and Sling let you sign up online.

Time Warner sent a Roku streaming device in the mail the day after I called to ask for it. I'm not good at setting things up, so it took me about an hour to connect the Roku to the TV. Make sure you switch the TV's input to the correct HDMI port. The Roku box, which also lets you watch Netflix, Amazon and other services, is smaller and slightly less unsightly than a cable box typically is. It also makes the Time Warner app easy to navigate.

Charter has a similar setup. With Sling and Comcast, you download an app. With PlayStation Vue, you sign up from a PlayStation or through a website if you're using Amazon devices.

Image: Eric Audras

USING IT

None of these are a perfect replacement for cable, with its DVR, hundreds of channels and, generally, pain-free delivery to TVs. There are limits on which devices you can watch on and how many different streams you can run.

They also could congest your Internet connection and eat into a data cap, if you have one. But Time Warner Cable and Comcast insist that their new TV services are on their managed networks rather than the regular Internet. That means it shouldn't slow you down on the Web. Sling has had issues with streaming quality for live TV.

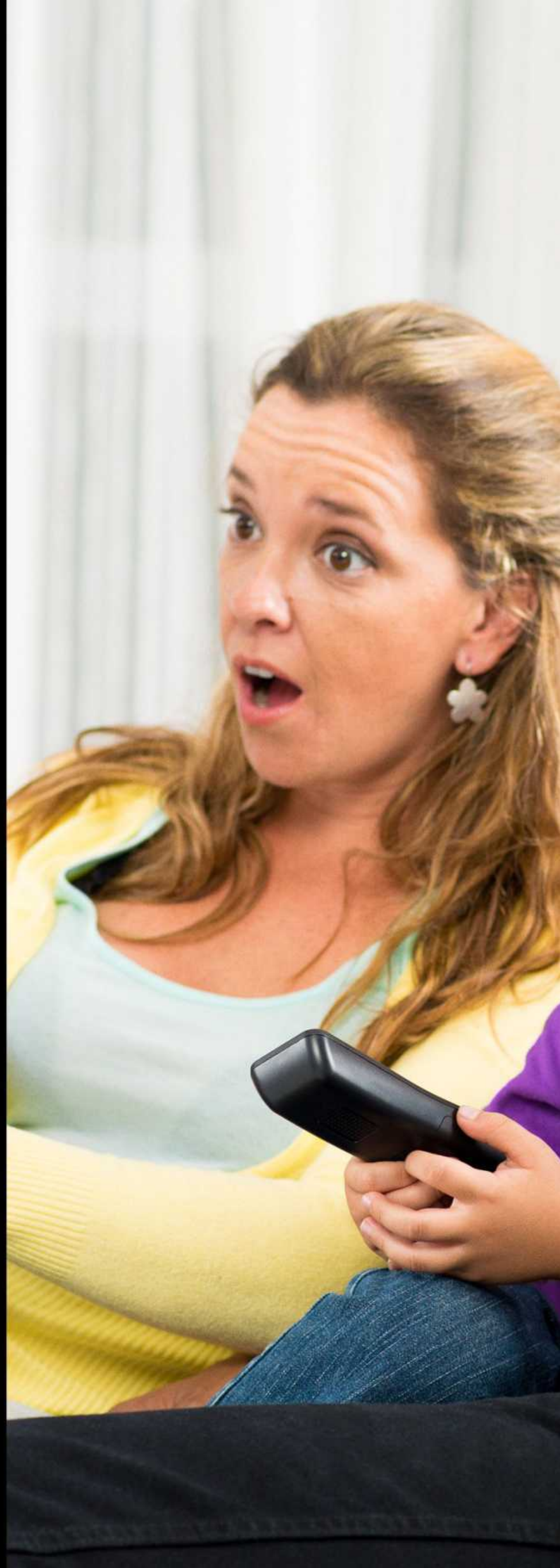
And for Comcast customers, its service won't count toward an Internet data cap; using Netflix, Sling or other online services will. Time Warner Cable and Charter don't have data caps.

There are also more blackout issues than cable. For example, if you have Sling, NFL games are blocked on smartphones because Verizon has exclusive rights, and some online channels won't deliver every show or movie their cable counterparts do.

Sony and Comcast give you a DVR that lets you skip commercials; others don't.

As with regular cable, if you leave your house, you get a lot less TV. What you get varies by company. They have documents online that tell you want you do and don't get outside your house, but they're not fun to figure out.

Sling trumpets that its service works the same wherever you are - at least within the U.S. Charter declined to talk about its service, so specifics aren't available.



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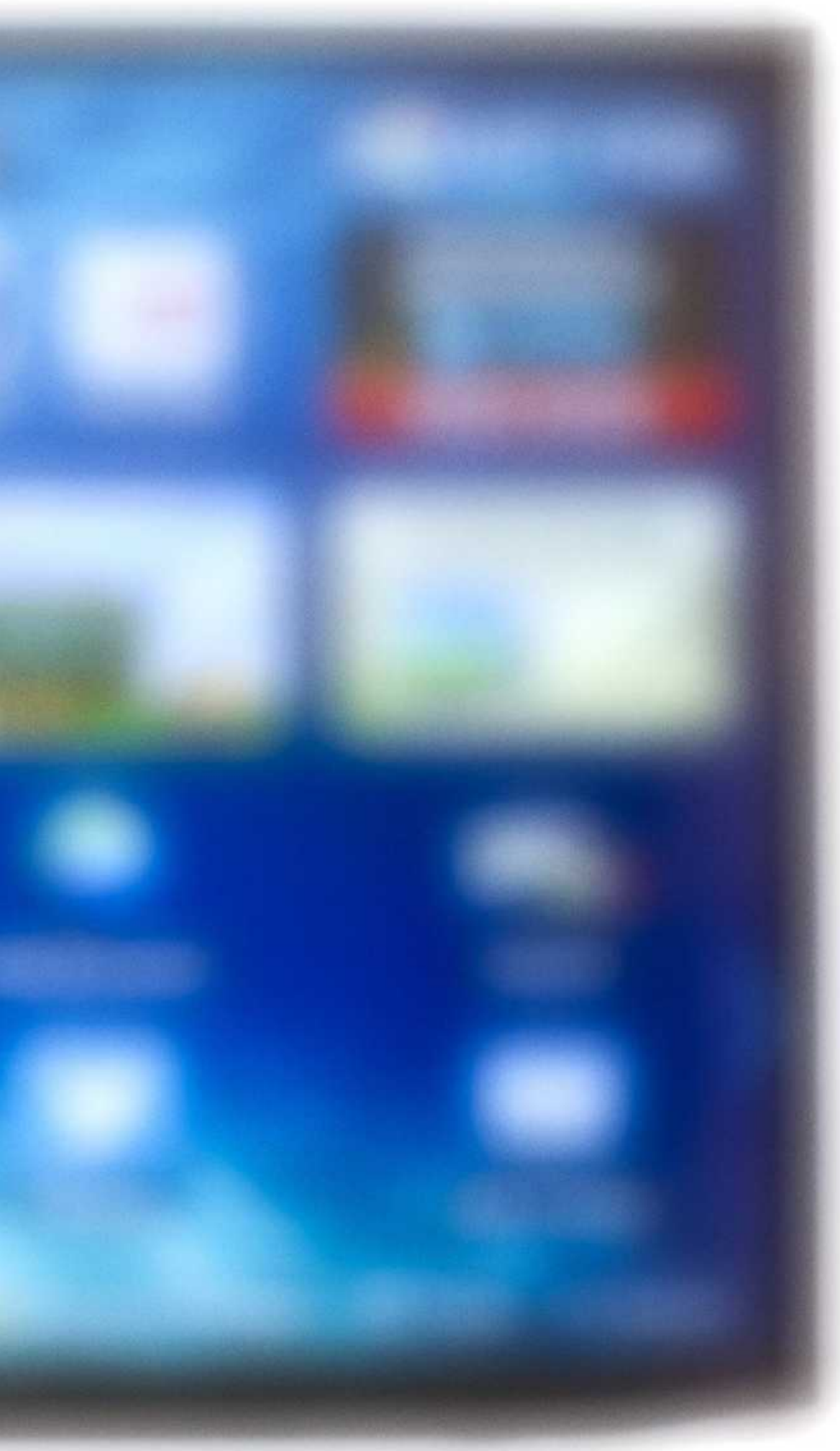


COMPARSIONS WITH TRADITIONAL CABLE

The cable company's average monthly take for TV service is $89.40, according to market research firm SNL Kagan. So you'd typically pay less with the streaming options, but you still have to pay for high-speed Internet, which costs at least $30 a month.

And for some services, the hassles traditionally associated with the cable industry persist. For example, with Time Warner, I couldn't watch much TV outside my home. Different customer service reps gave me different monthly fees; I eventually paid about $13 for a service advertised at $9.99. I got wrong information about a free trial and why certain fees were charged. Canceling required a phone call.

Time Warner's using a promotional price, the same as any cable bundle would, while Comcast's Stream price will probably rise as the company's own programming fees do. Sony and Dish say their prices aren't promotional.

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE NEW ONLINE CABLE BUNDLES

Traditional cable providers are launching TV packages that don't require cable boxes - good for you because you save on monthly equipment fees and don't need a technician to come install it for you.

But there are also drawbacks. Some services are easy to add and cancel, like Netflix is. Time Warner Cable required a phone call for both. Apart from Sling, leaving your home cuts off access to a lot of video. As with traditional cable service, sometimes there are unexpected fees that end up on your bill.

A breakdown of what's good and what's not:

DISH'S SLING TV

What you get About 20 cable channels, including ESPN, ABC Family, AMC and Food Network. Over-the-air channels like ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC are not available; Univision is for an additional fee. You can only watch one stream at a time, so it's not for families.

Benefits It's the best deal for live TV, with a slim package of some of the most popular cable channels. The same shows are available at home as when you're away.

Drawbacks There have been quality issues with streaming. You can't record shows. There are some on-demand episodes, but you can't skip commercials for most, and it's hard to figure out where the on-demand episodes are. Sling announced at CES last week that it will improve that by March.

You don't get access to apps created by channels except for WatchESPN. A family with multiple TVs would probably want more than one subscription. (If you add HBO, you get three streams for that channel only.)

Where it's available Nationwide.

Price per month Starts at $20, plus taxes where required. Adding HBO costs $15, and add-on packages of channels with themes like sports, movies, kids and world news are $5 each.

PlayStation.Vue
THE TV SERVICE YOU
WISH EXISTED...EXISTS
SHOWTIME

SONY VUE

What you get Major broadcast networks and popular cable channels. Those owned by Disney, including ABC and ESPN, will be added at an unspecified date, and CW isn't available. You can watch up to three simultaneous streams in a home.

Benefits You can record shows so you can fast-forward through commercials, but they expire after 28 days, with no ability to archive them, as you can with traditional DVRs.

Drawbacks You need a PlayStation or Amazon's Fire TV device to sign up. Price is comparable to regular cable.

Where it's available Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Philadelphia and the San Francisco Bay Area.

Price per month Three tiers. The cheapest is $50 a month for about 50 channels, including AMC, CNN, ESPN, Fox and NBC. Tops out at $65 for 85 channels. Pricier bundles have more sports options. Showtime is another $11, and a few others are available on an a la carte basis.

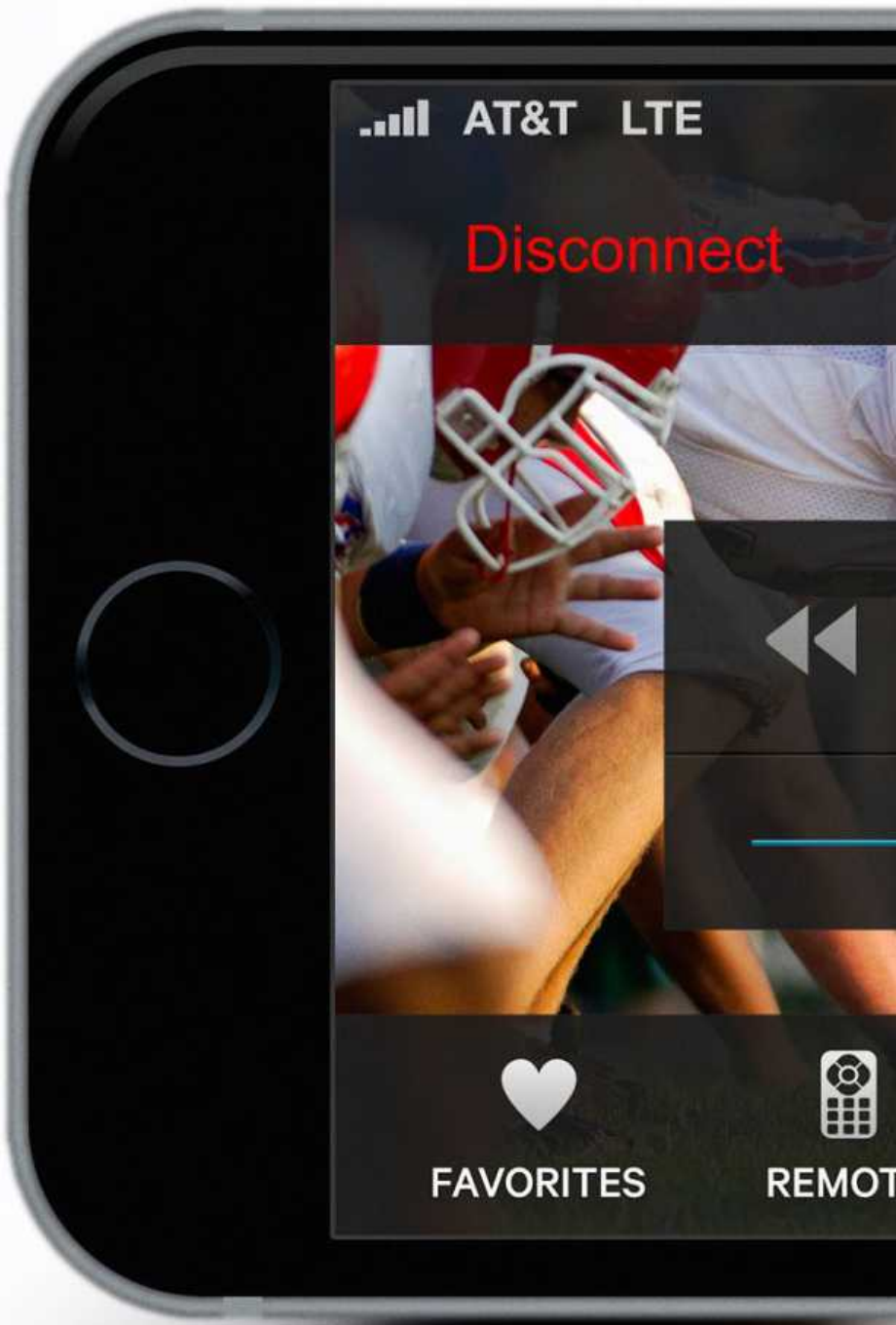
get Local networks, HBO and the ability to watch two simultaneous streams.

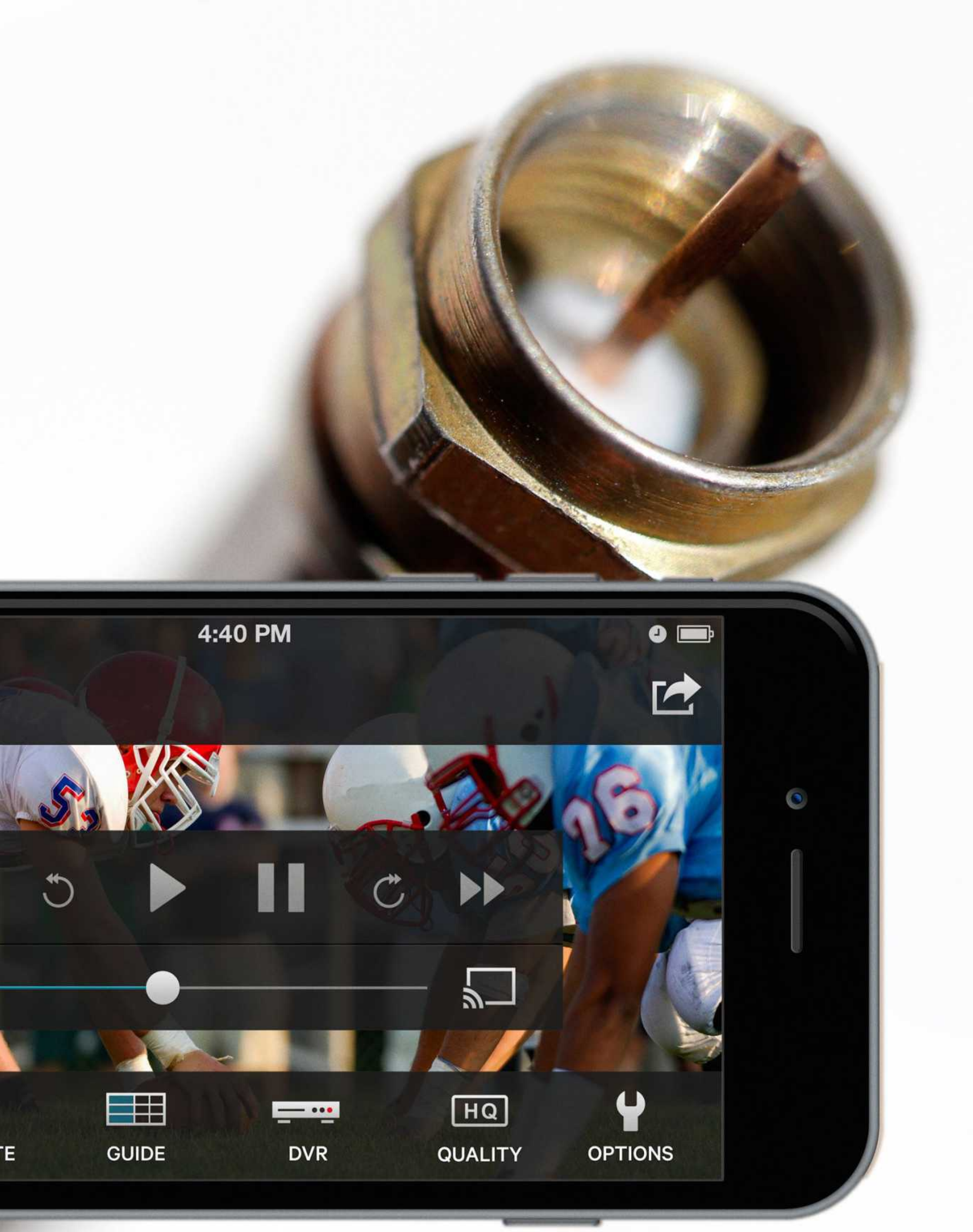
Benefits An Internet-based DVR with 20 hours of storage that lets you fast-forward commercials and watch outside the home.

Drawbacks Live TV works only on phones, tablets and computers in your house. For the TV, you need an antenna for live channels, though you get channel apps like HBO Go and Fox Now for on-demand video if you have a streaming gadget like Roku, Apple TV or Xbox.

Where it's available Boston and Chicago markets for Comcast's existing Internet customers. The company plans for expand to other regions and create more channel options.

Price per month $15, plus taxes and fees, which can add up to an additional $4.




4:40 PM
GUIDE
DVR
HQ
QUALITY
OPTIONS

TIME WARNER CABLE'S ROKU APP (WITH NO CABLE BOX)

What you get Different tiers of service that mirror cable offerings Local networks and a bundle with popular cable channels. Five simultaneous streams.

Benefits You get TV and most popular streaming video services through a free (for now) Roku 3 box, which is easy to use. Channels are high-definition quality.

Drawbacks With taxes and fees, a service advertised at $10 cost me more than $13. You need a phone call to sign up and cancel. Channels took about three seconds to load.

Where it's available New York City; Mt. Vernon, New York; New Jersey for people who also pay for Time Warner Cable. There's no timeline beyond that.

Price per month $10 for over-the-air channels, $20 if you add Showtime and Starz, $50 to also add several dozen cable networks including AMC, Disney, ESPN, Fox News and TNT. These are promotional prices that will rise. Local taxes and fees are additional.

Charter Communications has been pitching a streaming service to its Internet customers in markets including St. Louis and Madison, Wisconsin. The company wouldn't provide details, but according to its ads, the service comes with a free Roku. Local networks plus HBO or Showtime cost $13 a month, before taxes and fees; adding 16 cable networks brought it to $20 a month.

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GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS
HOLLYWOOD FOREIGN PRESS ASSOCIATION

'MARTIAN,' 'REVENANT' GET AWARDS BOOST WITH TOP GLOBES WINS

The 73rd annual Golden Globes had a few curveballs up its sleeves, and the biggest ones weren't even from acerbic host Ricky Gervais, who kept the show alive with his biting quips and takedowns of the business that the awards were celebrating.

But, instead of just being another booze-soaked, starry year at the Beverly Hilton Hotel, Sunday's bleep-filled ceremony also gave a boost to two films that have been lingering on the edges of an undefined award season - the crowd-pleasing space romp "The Martian" and the brutal frontier epic "The Revenant," mere days before the Academy Award nominees are revealed.

Image: Paul Buck

Alejandro Inarritu's "The Revenant" won awards in the drama category for best picture and best actor for star Leonardo DiCaprio, who seems to be on a path to an Oscar for his portrayal of the 1820s fur trapper Hugh Glass.

Inarritu, whose "Birdman" swept the Oscars last year, also beat out "The Martian's" Ridley Scott for the best director award. "The Martian" did win best comedy film and best actor in a comedy for star Matt Damon. The dubious placement of "The Martian" in the comedy category was a running joke throughout the evening - even Scott questioned it as he walked on stage to accept the best picture award.

But a win is a win, and although this awards season is far from predetermined, neither "The Martian" nor "The Revenant" were considered real frontrunners, especially against nominees like "Spotlight," "Carol," "Mad Max: Fury Road," and "The Big Short."

"Spotlight," the fact-based drama about The Boston Globe's investigation into sex abuses in the Catholic Church has been the one favorite throughout the season in both critics and guild awards. While it is considered a lock for a Best Picture nomination on Thursday, the film apparently did not win the favor of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association and received no awards on Sunday.

Adam McKay's star-studded financial collapse comedy "The Big Short" also walked away empty handed, despite some rising awards momentum lately with recent Producers Guild and Writers Guild nominations. Critics darlings "Carol" and "Mad Max: Fury Road" were surprisingly shut out as well.

But all will come into focus on Thursday when Oscar nominees are announced. Voting for Oscar nominations closed on Friday, but the campaigning won't end until the actual ceremony on Feb. 28. Any added momentum helps, even if Gervais joked at the start of the show that the award is "a bit of metal that some confused old journalist wanted to give you to meet you in person and take a selfie."

Gervais' snark aside, the Golden Globes have worked for years to shed an image of eccentric selections made by a group of little-known international journalists. The Globes have instead grown into one of the most popular award show broadcasts of the year, thanks to increasingly credible nominees, its trademark relaxed atmosphere and its unique position as a major awards show that honors both film and television.

Despite some outliers in the nominee ranks, the film acting awards went to a more expected lot. Jennifer Lawrence won best actress in a comedy for "Joy," her third Golden Globe win for a David O. Russell film, who she thanked effusively in her speech. She also beat out her friend Amy Schumer in the category.

"She's gonna be fine," Lawrence said backstage. "She's funny and hilarious and will win many things."

In what is probably the year's most competitive category, best actress in a drama, Brie Larson won out over Cate Blanchett ("Carol") and Saoirse Ronan ("Brooklyn) for her affecting performance as a woman in captivity in "Room." Last year's winner Julianne Moore ("Still Alice") went on to win the Oscar as well.

Image: Matt Sayles

Awards race dark horse "Steve Jobs" also got some love on Sunday with wins for Kate Winslet, for best supporting actress, and Aaron Sorkin, for the screenplay.

Sylvester Stallone knocked out some heavyweight competition, too, in the supporting actor category with a win for "Creed," beating out Idris Elba ("Beasts of No Nation"), Michael Shannon ("99 Homes"), Mark Rylance ("Bridge of Spies"), and Paul Dano ("Love & Mercy"). The crowd greeted his win with a standing ovation.

"I want to thank my imaginary friend Rocky Balboa for being the best friend I ever had," said Stallone, whose only other Golden Globes nod was also for portraying the Italian Stallion in "Rocky."

Despite some diversity in the nominee ranks, the film acting awards were still won exclusively by Caucasians, rousing some worry that the Oscars may follow suit despite increased scrutiny after last year's #OscarsSoWhite criticisms.

Best foreign language film went to Hungary's Laszlo Nemes' "Son of Saul," a harrowing view of life inside Auschwitz, and best animated film went to Pixar's acclaimed "Inside Out."

The big television winners included USA's "Mr. Robot," Taraji P. Henson for "Empire" and Jon Hamm for "Mad Men."

The Gervais-led Globes evidenced little of the seriousness that marks most award shows, or the teary-eyed acceptance speeches. Instead, the Globes had a particularly unraveled atmosphere that included Jonah Hill dressed as the bear from "The Revenant," copious discussion of "Transparent" star Jeffrey Tambor's

HOLLYWOOD
FOREIGN
PRESS
ASSOCIATION
BEVERLY

Image: Paul Buck

male anatomy by Gervais, and much buzzing about Sean Penn's escapade with Mexican drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman.

Cecil B. DeMille lifetime achievement honoree Denzel Washington also fumbled his way through his speech, which generally serves as a poignant respite in an otherwise irreverent evening.

And yet, buoyed by more respectable picks in recent years and a three-year hosting stint by Tina Fey and Amy Poehler, the boozy Globes have been on the rise, even if their choices won't directly affect who will get that coveted Oscar nomination. In Hollywood, though, it's all about the buzz, and "The Martian" and "The Revenant" just leapt back into the spotlight.

GOLDEN GLOBES SEEN BY 18.5 MILLION VIEWERS, NIELSEN SAYS

The Nielsen company says an estimated 18.5 million viewers watched the Golden Globes Awards ceremony on NBC on Sunday night.

That's down from last year's audience of 19.3 million viewers, though NBC notes the Globes telecast faced tough competition with the final 15 minutes of Fox's NFL playoff game.

The Globes broadcast, hosted by Ricky Gervais, was also down from the 2014 telecast, co-hosted by Tina Fey and Amy Poehler, when 20.9 million viewers tuned in. That was the most-watched Golden Globes in a decade.

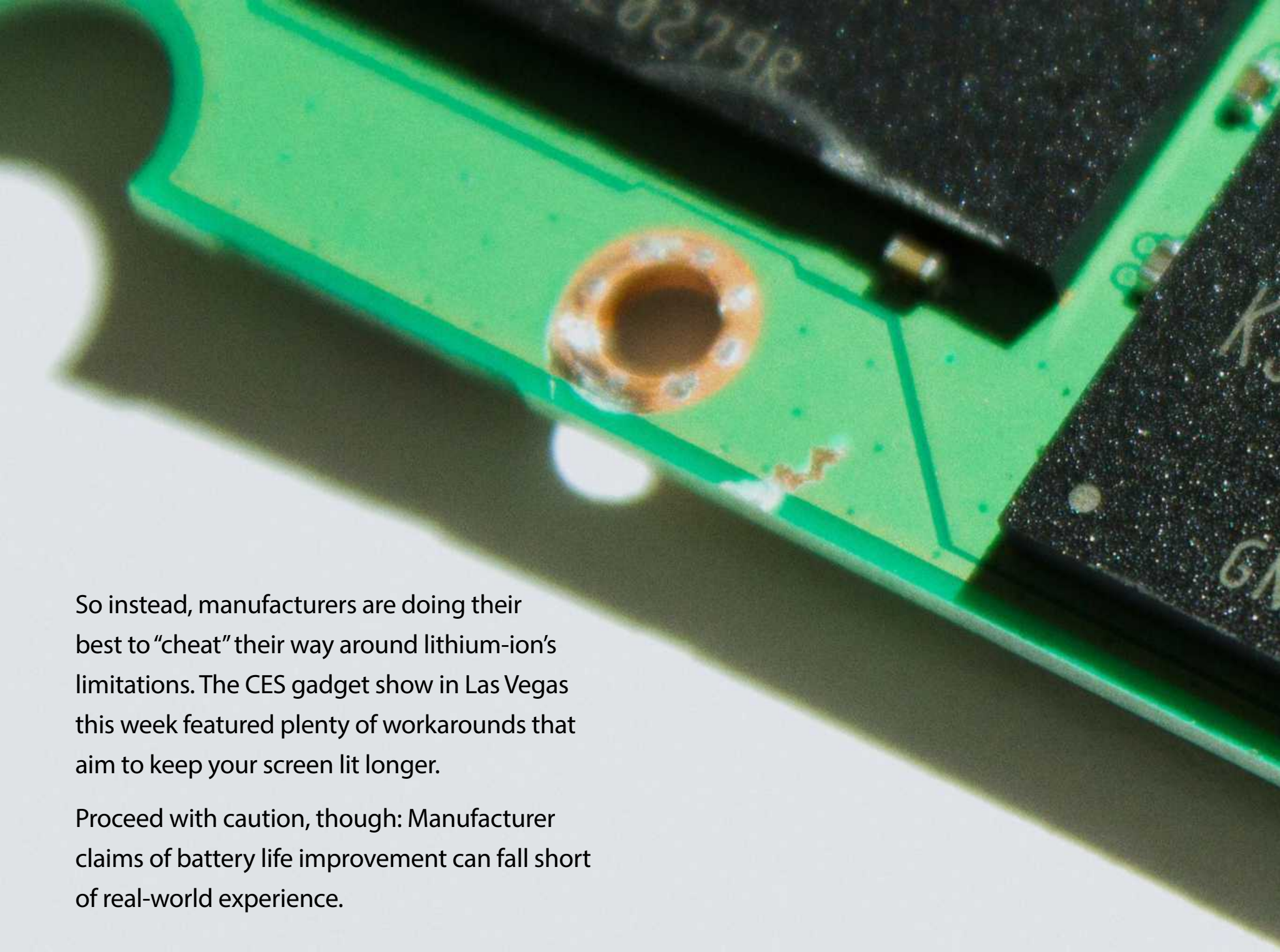
Gervais returned to hosting duties this year after having presided from 2010 to 2012.

DOES YOUR BATTERY LIFE STINK? TRY SOME HIGH-TECH WORKAROUNDS

It's enough to make you want to drop everything and race for the nearest power outlet: Your workday isn't even done, and your smartphone or laptop battery is already in the red zone.

If you're hoping that techno-progress will dispel that depleted feeling, you may be in for a long wait. Battery life is constrained by limitations in chemistry, and improvements aren't keeping pace with demands from modern gadgets.

We're still dependent on the venerable lithium-ion cell, first commercialized by Sony in 1991; it's light, safe and holds a lot of charge relative to most alternatives, but it isn't getting better fast enough to keep up with our growing electronic demands.



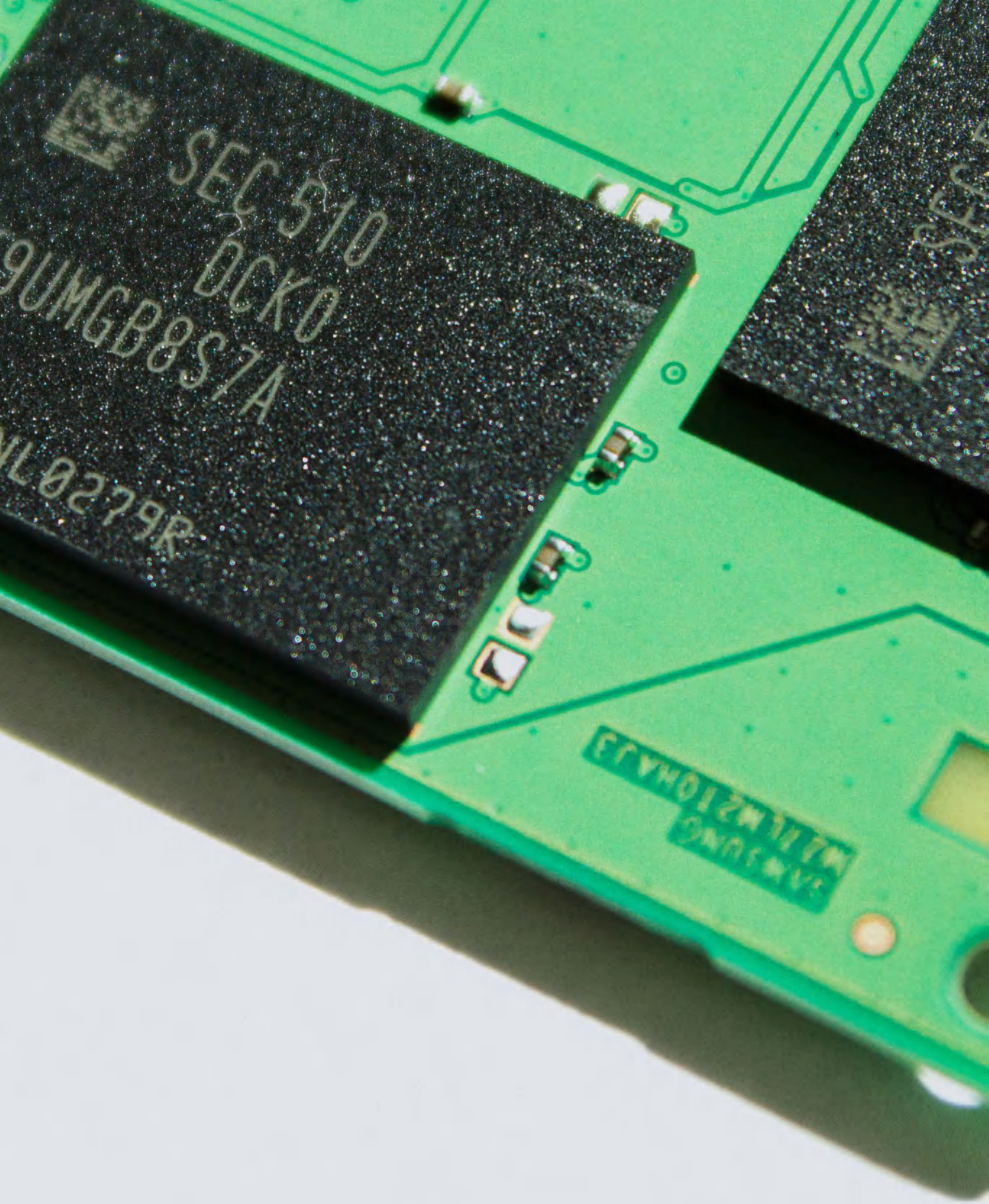
So instead, manufacturers are doing their best to "cheat" their way around lithium-ion's limitations. The CES gadget show in Las Vegas this week featured plenty of workarounds that aim to keep your screen lit longer.

Proceed with caution, though: Manufacturer claims of battery life improvement can fall short of real-world experience.

NEW CHIPS

Not that long ago, computer-chip makers competed to make their chips ever faster and more capable, with power consumption a secondary consideration. But the boom in energy hungry smartphones and laptops means that companies like Intel need to put much more emphasis on power efficiency these days.

Intel says its sixth-generation Core chips, known as Skylake, add a little more than an hour to battery life to laptops compared with the previous generation, according to spokesman Scott Massey. The chips utilize a more compact design, hard-wired functions that used to be run via software and fine-tuning how they ramp power use up and down.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BETTER-DESIGNED LAPTOPS

Laptop manufacturers are smartly sipping power, too.

HP says the Spectre x360 notebook it introduced in March gains up to 72 minutes of battery life, for a total of up to 13 hours, thanks in part to Intel's new chip. Among other tricks, the PC doesn't refresh the screen as often if the image isn't moving. "If we can solve a bunch of small problems, they can add up," HP vice president Mike Nash said.

Similarly, Lenovo's new ThinkPad X1 Yoga tablet turns off its touch screen and keyboard backlight if it senses its owner is walking and has the screen folded back like an open book. Vaio, the computer maker formerly owned by Sony, says its Z Canvas launched in the U.S. in October benefits from shrinking components and efficiently distributing heat to make more room for a bigger battery.

And Dell says it has worked with manufacturers to squeeze more battery capacity into the same space. It says its efforts recently boosted the energy storage of its XPS 13 laptop by 7.7 percent compared to an earlier version of the same model .

Charging

NEW CHARGERS

Maybe it's your phone that's not keeping up. If so, you might check out new accessories designed to make it easier and faster to charge back up.

Kickstarter-funded Ampy uses your body's kinetic energy to charge up a pager-sized device. Strap it to your arm or a belt and it can recharge a smartphone in real time; an hour of jogging or similar exercise yields about an hour of use. You could also just throw it in your bag and get the same extra hour of gadget life after a week of walking around - not an awesome trade off, maybe, but possibly better than nothing.

The wireless-charging technology Qi makes it possible to charge a phone without plugging it in. Instead, you lay it down on a special pad and let electromagnetic field coupling do the work. Wireless charging has always been much slower than wired, although Qi's backers say it's speeding up. But wired charging is getting faster, too, at least for phones with the latest hardware- and with Qi, you still have to line up your device just right on the sometimes fussy pads.

iTunes
Review

Trailer

Movies & TV Shows

iTunes **Preview**

by Robert Zemeckis
Genre: Drama
Released: 2015
Price: $14.99

★★★★½
82 Ratings

Rotten **Tomatoes**
CERTIFIED FRESH 85%

The Walk

This biographical movie of French high-wire artist Philippe Petit depicts his early life, his time as a circus performer, and his infamous tightrope walk between the Twin Towers.

FIVE FACTS:

1. During the movie's New York City premiere, the realism of the walk itself allegedly caused some viewers to vomit from vertigo.

2. Petit himself trained Joseph Gordon-Levitt to tightrope walk. Petit predicted that he would need no more than 8 days of training to walk correctly, which came true.

3. As depicted in the movie, Petit suffered very few negative consequences for his walk. As well as being cheered on by crowds, construction workers, and police, he also received a lifetime pass to the Twin Towers' Observation Deck.

4. Petit's other major high-wire performances include walks between the Eiffel Tower and Palais de Chaillot, a walk at the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and several walks at major cathedrals.

5. In a book about his Twin Towers walk, Petit stated that he would "offer to walk again", if the towers were rebuilt after the 9/11 attacks. The towers were eventually replaced by a different complex of buildings, thus ridding Petit of the opportunity.

See more in iTunes

Cast Interview

The Visit

Two siblings set off to meet their grandparents for the first time, and make a documentary about doing so. However, 'Pop-Pop' and 'Nana' aren't as friendly as loving as they seem...

FIVE FACTS:

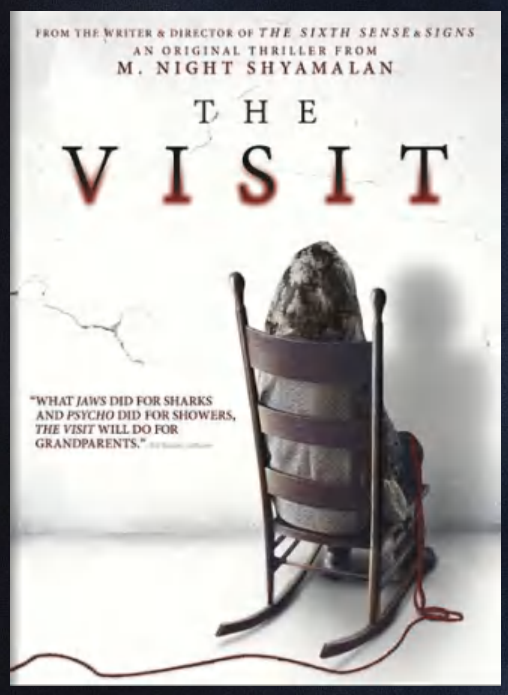
1. Director M. Night Shyamalan is famed for directing and writing legendary films, includingThe Sixth Sense, Signs, and even Stuart Little.

2. The Visit is Shyamalan's first found footage horror film.

3. Shyamalan is known for making cameos in most of his movies, but this is not the case for The Visit.

4. The Visit is Shyamalan's lowest budget studio film.

5. After releasing a string of critically-acclaimed movies in the nineties, Shyamalan's work throughout the noughties had him receive awards for worst director, screenplay, and film, due to his often-predictable surprise twists.



iTunes **Preview**

by M. Night Shyamalan
Genre: Thriller
Released: 2015
Price: $14.99

★★★★★
203 Ratings

Rotten **Tomatoes**
CERTIFIED FRESH
64%

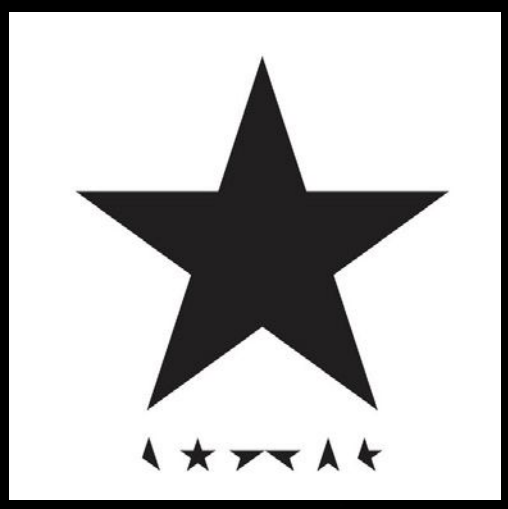
Trailer

Cast Interview

iTunes

Review

Music



iTunes **Preview**

Genre: Rock
Released: Jan 08, 2016
8 Songs
Price: $9.99

★★★★☆
875 Ratings

Blackstar
David Bowie

The 26th album by late music legend David Bowie may be his wackiest of all. His second album in three years may not be the typical Bowie that everyone knows and loves, but it's an absolute must for any fan of his.

FIVE FACTS:

1. Blackstar also features Tony Visconti, who has produced albums for other notable acts including T.Rex, Iggy Pop, and Adam Ant, and James Murphy, the driving force behind New York electronic act LCD Soundsystem.

2. After the release of previous album The Next Day, Visconti stated that "[Bowie] was pretty adamant he's never going to perform live again."

3. Bowie's last tour was the 2003-2004 Reality Tour, and his last live performance was in 2006.

4. Blackstar was released on the 8th of January 2016, which was also Bowie's 69th birthday.

5. David Bowie tragically died just a few days after the album's release (01/10/16) after an 18-month long battle with cancer. After this, many fans are interpreting Blackstar as being a farewell album, and that Bowie was aware that his time was coming to an end shortly after its release.

Leading single from the album

See more in iTunes

Second single 'Lazarus'

Leave Me Alone

Hinds

The indie quartet from Madrid's debut album has been long-awaited, and the end result doesn't disappoint. Already critically acclaimed by the NME and The Guardian, and with fans such as Bobby Gillespie (Primal Scream) and Patrick Carney (The Black Keys), there's no better time to jump on the Hinds bandwagon, before your friends do!

FIVE FACTS:

1. The band were originally named 'Deers', but they were forced to change it at the end of 2014 due to the threat of legal action from a similarly named band named 'The Dears'

2. Hinds have released material through Burger Records. This label, known for its rowdy garage punk releases, has also worked with, Dave Grohl, Beck, and psych legends Brian Jonestown Massacre.

3. During their second year as Deers, the band supported significant musical acts including The Libertines, The Vaccines, and fellow Burger Records artists Black Lips.

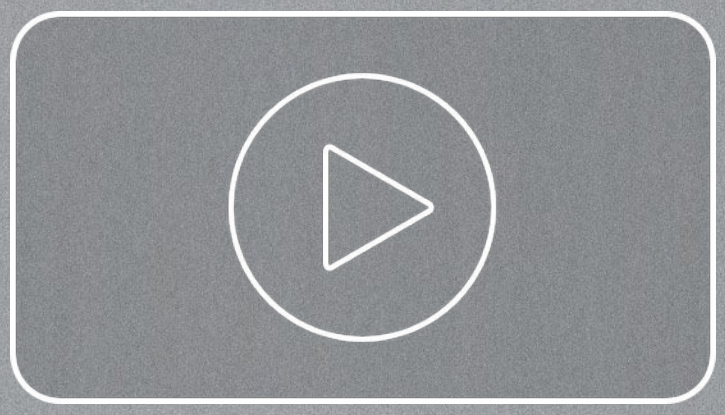
4. Hinds have also released material with Mom + Pop Music, whose alumni and current artists include Metric, Flume, and Courtney Barnett.

5. The band cites The Strokes, Mac DeMarco, and Ty Segall as some of their main influences.

iTunes **Preview**

Genre: Alternative
Released: Jan 08, 2016
12 Songs
Price: $7.99

★★★★★
77 Ratings



KEXP performance

The music video for 'Garden'

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W
C

TIME WARNER CABLE SAYS 320,000 PASSWORDS POSSIBLY STOLEN

Time Warner Cable says the email addresses and passwords of about 320,000 of its customers nationwide may have been stolen by hackers.

Time Warner Cable Inc. says it was told by the FBI about the possible compromise and has yet to determine how the information was stolen. But the company says there's no evidence of a breach of the Time Warner Cable systems that operate customer email accounts.

The New York-based company says it's likely that the emails and passwords were previously stolen either through malware downloaded during phishing attacks, or indirectly through data breaches of other companies that stored Time Warner Cable customer information.

The New York company is contacting customers who may be affected and asking them to change their email passwords as a precaution. It emphasizes that the account information potentially stolen represents less than 2 percent of the total number of customer email accounts it manages.

SAMSUNG

CHILDREN'S BOOKS ON CLASS AND WINNIE THE POOH WIN PRIZES

Matt de la Pena's and Christian Robinson's "Last Stop on Market Street" nearly made history twice Monday

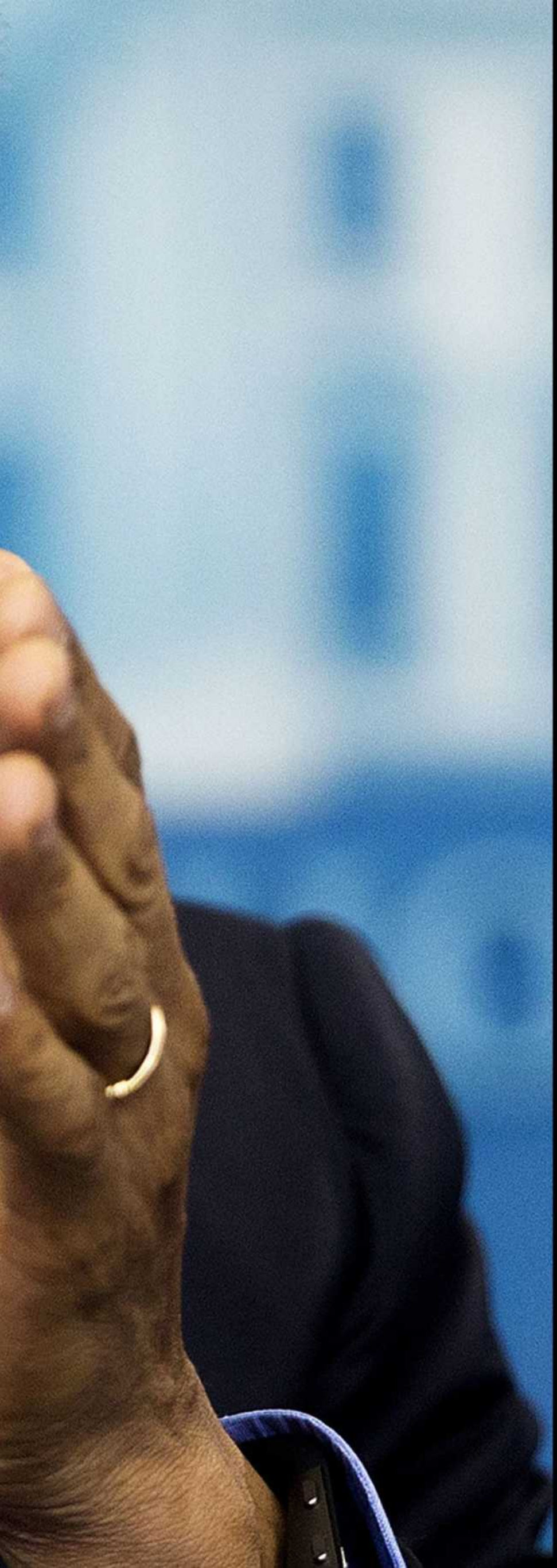
The illustrated exploration of race and class through the eyes of a boy and his grandmother won the Newbery Medal for the best children's book of 2015, making de la Pena the first Hispanic writer to receive the 94-year-old prize, one of the most cherished among children's writers. "Last Stop on Market Street" came close to another rare coup by finishing as a runner-up for the Caldecott Medal for the top illustrated book. The winner was "Finding Winnie," the story behind A.A. Milne's famous literary creation, illustrated by Sophie Blackall and written by Lindsay Mattick.

The Newbery and Caldecott awards were announced by the American Library Association, which has gathered in Boston for its annual midwinter meeting.

Ta-Nehisi Coates' "Between the World and Me," winner last fall of the National Book Award, was among 10 recipients of the Alex prize for adult books that appeal to teen readers. Coates' book is an open letter to his teenage son about racism and police violence. The association also handed out two separate lifetime achievement awards for a former Caldecott winner, the illustrator Jerry Pinckney. Another lifetime achievement honor was given to novelist David Levithan, who also works as editorial director at Scholastic.

Rita Williams-Garcia won her second Coretta Scott King Award in three years for the best book by an African-American writer. Williams-Garcia was cited for "Gone Crazy in Alabama," the third of a trilogy about the Gaither sisters. Laura Ruby's "Bone Gap" won the Michael L. Printz Award for excellence in literature written for young adults. The Belpre award for best Latino/Latina book was given to "Enchanted Air: Two Cultures, Two Wings: A Memoir," written by Margarita Engle. Rafael Lopez won the Belpre illustrator prize for "The Drum Dream Girl," written by Margarita Engle.

Image: Pablo Martinez



US MEETS WITH TECH LEADERS ON ANTI-TERROR EFFORTS

After clashing with technology companies over encryption and government surveillance, the Obama administration adopted a friendlier tone Friday as it sought to enlist Silicon Valley's help in stopping terrorist groups from recruiting and mobilizing followers online.

The government also announced initiatives against violent extremism, including an overhaul of its efforts to counter extremist messages around the globe.

In Silicon Valley, top administration officials held a closed-door meeting with Apple CEO Tim Cook and senior executives from Google, Facebook, Yahoo and other tech firms. While the session was described by tech company representatives as cordial, no specific agreement or other outcome was announced.

"This meeting confirmed that we are united in our goal to keep terrorists and terror-promoting material off the Internet," Facebook said a statement. Spokesmen for several other companies declined comment on the meeting Friday.

A White House spokesman, meanwhile, took pains to describe tech leaders as patriotic Americans who have no interest in seeing "their tools and their technology being used to aid and abet terrorists."

Officials attending the closed-door meeting in Silicon Valley included Attorney General Loretta Lynch, White House chief of staff Denis McDonough, counterterrorism adviser Lisa Monaco and Megan Smith, a former Google executive who is now the government's chief technology officer.

The involvement of high-level officials is a sign that the effort to counter extremist propaganda online is a top priority for the president, according to White House spokesman Josh Earnest. He added that he did not expect a major announcement or breakthrough on Friday.

The government wants tech companies' help in stopping extremists from finding "refuge" online, while also looking for ways to "create, publish and amplify" messages that counter extremist propaganda, Earnest said.

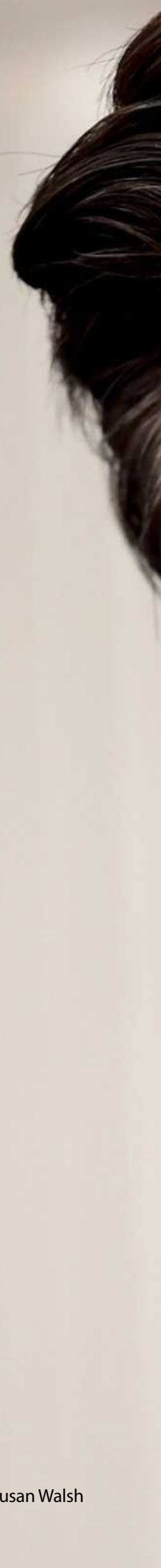


Image: Susan Walsh

Leading Internet companies say they remove content that violates their policies by promoting terrorism or threatening violence, but they are reluctant to infringe on free speech. They also don't want to be viewed around the world as agents of the U.S. government. And they have chafed at government officials' criticism of tech companies' refusal to provide "back doors" into encryption programs that guard customers' online messages and other files.

Still, Earnest told reporters: "Our sense here is there's some common ground we should be able to find." He added, "We're hopeful there would be a willingness on their part to work with us and try to find some solutions."

While the discussions will likely continue, no further meetings were announced. Two tech company representatives said encryption was not the main focus of Friday's meeting, although it was discussed.

Also on Friday, Obama administration officials said the Homeland Security and Justice Departments will jointly run a new task force focused on domestic efforts to prevent violent extremism.

The State Department, meanwhile, is revamping an existing program aimed at encouraging foreign governments and private groups outside the U.S. to speak out against the Islamic State and other militants. That represents a shift away from a previous effort to produce U.S.-sponsored videos and other messages, which has not been viewed as a success.

Image: Susan Walsh

INSIDER Q&A: STUBHUB'S PRESIDENT ON GOING MOBILE

HOME OF THE LA GALAXY
SPORTS AUTHORITY
TOYOTA
LA CURACAO
UN POCO DE SU PAIS

Image: Eric Millette

StubHub, eBay's ticket reselling subsidiary based in San Francisco, hired Scott Cutler as its new president in April. He was previously head of global listings at the New York Stock Exchange. Since joining StubHub, he's worked to simplify its pricing and revamp its app to better compete in an increasingly mobile world. Here he discusses why he came to StubHub, what its users look like and how the company moved its service to mobile. Answers edited for clarity and length.

Q: Why the jump from the NYSE to StubHub?

A: I was hired to transform the (NYSE) brand and spent the next nine years rebuilding the platform. When I got there we had less than a 5 percent market share in tech and when I left we had 30 percent. ... What excited me the most about (StubHub) was it was a marketplace. ... It's not the same situation as the NYSE, but the need to develop relationships with the ecosystem - and for us that ecosystem includes leagues, teams, content holders, artists, performers, live entertainment and then the broader technology community - where you can take our e-commerce platform and introduce mobile and social and global aspects to it. It really was an exciting opportunity that I love being a part of.

Q: What are the demographics of the average StubHub user?

A: It's a pretty wide demographic depending on the genre. If we look at our business in simplified terms, half of it is sports and half of it is live entertainment, mostly concerts. The demographic in sports is very much an 18-35 year old male dominated market. In live entertainment, it's a wide range of

demographic, male and female, that like to attend concerts. Our customers are a younger-skewed demographic but I'm still surprised at the number of people that are going to events, (when) this is their first mobile transactional experience.

I live in Los Altos, by Palo Alto. My next door neighbor is 80 years old and has been there for a long time. And I introduced myself and he said "Oh I love StubHub, I go to Giants games all the time, I sell my season tickets there and buy there all the time."

Q: Everyone is doing everything on their phone. What are you doing to make StubHub a great mobile service?

A: (Mobile) is now half of our business, so that has been a huge transition for us. Earlier this year, in the early summer we decided what we needed to do is have a mobile-first platform. What that meant is the interaction you have on that mobile device is the same if you're searching on the Web from a mobile device or if you are on the app or on desktop. So we completely redesigned our architecture to be multiscreen, but one platform, one common UI, one experience. It allowed us to simplify the workflows. You could really come in, find what you want, and get out in literally like four clicks. That makes for a great mobile experience.

Hub!™

OBAMA TAKES THIS YEAR'S STATE OF UNION TO YOUTUBE, SNAPCHAT

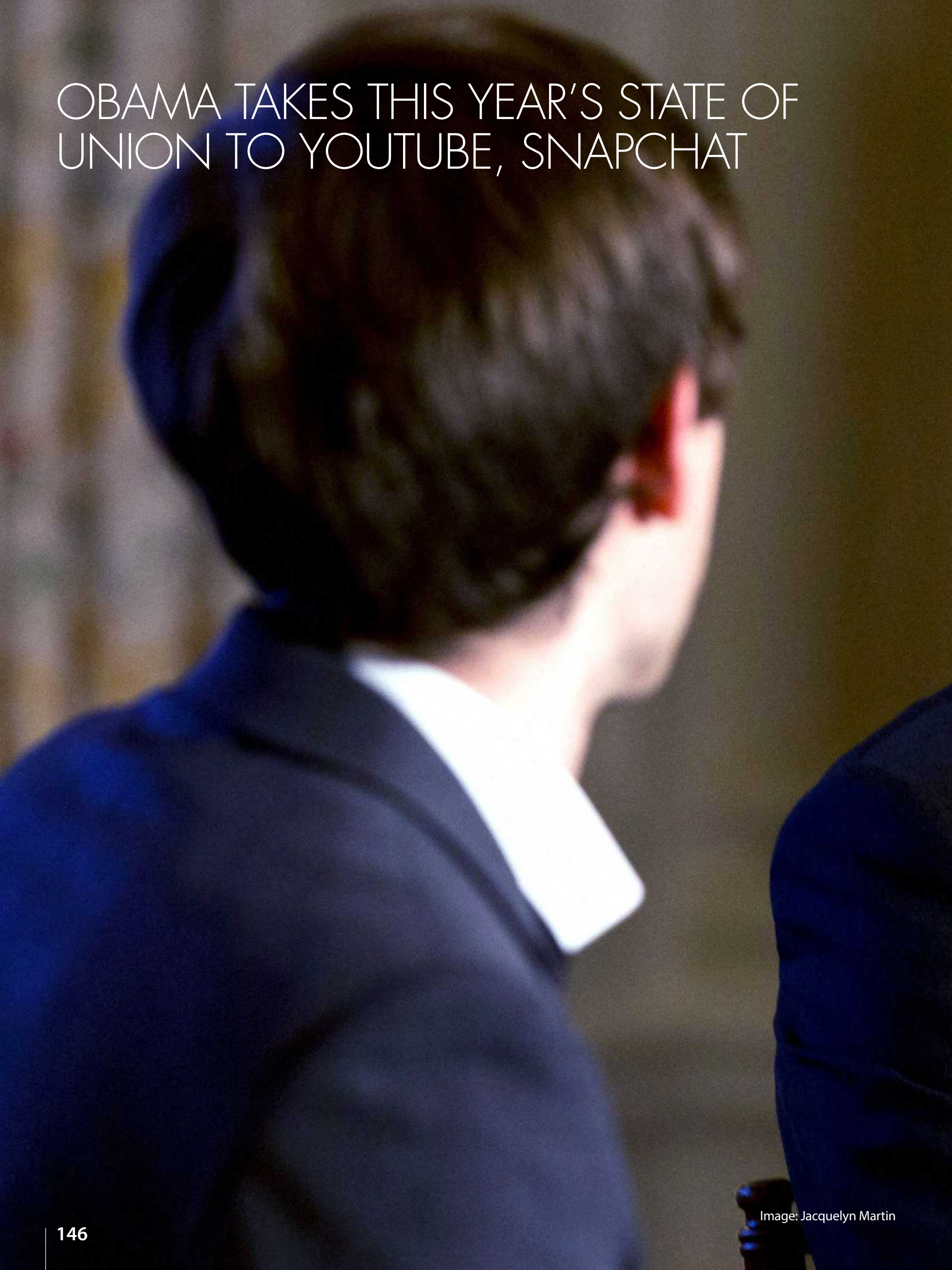


Image: Jacquelyn Martin

Image: Olivier Douliery / Pool

Wired up, and ready to go.

President Barack Obama is pushing his State of the Union address further into cyberspace this year with appearances on YouTube and Snapchat.

The White House says Tuesday's address will stream live on YouTube, giving viewers another way to watch. Then Obama will sit down Friday with three YouTube celebrities for a live interview from the East Room.

Ingrid Nilsen, a 26-year-old known on YouTube as "Missglamorazzi," will interview the president. So will Adande Thorne, a video game enthusiast known online as "sWooZie," and Destin Sandlin, who makes educational videos.

The White House is also debuting a Snapchat account with behind-the-scenes images of the speech.

The social media blitz continues Obama's campaign to reach Americans who don't watch the speech through traditional channels.

ARE UNLIMITED DATA CELLPHONE PLANS ON THEIR WAY BACK?

AT&T is once again experimenting with offering unlimited data plans to smartphone customers while promoting its DirecTV service, signaling a potential reversal of industry trends toward data caps and charges for big video watchers.

AT&T is trying to capitalize on its $48.5 billion purchase of DirecTV last year. On Monday, it's announcing an unlimited data plan for cellphones, if you also get DirecTV or AT&T's home-TV service, U-verse.

The unlimited data deal may be cheaper than AT&T's limited-data plan if you have a family that watches a lot of video and want cable; if it's one person, sticking with the existing plan is likely a better value, especially if you don't want cable. It's a limited-time offer but AT&T won't say when the promotion would end. People who sign up can keep their plans when or if the promotion ends.

While AT&T killed its unlimited data plan in 2010 for new customers, followed by Verizon in 2012, unlimited plans - with qualifiers - do still exist. Both the biggest wireless carriers let their existing customers keep unlimited plans, although the price has gone up recently. Late last year, they announced price increases - Verizon charging an extra $20 per line, AT&T another $5.

T-Mobile and Sprint, the No. 3 and No. 4 carriers, currently offer unlimited plans for new customers (T-Mobile also just raised the price). But they may throttle, or slow your speed, after you use up 23 gigabtyes. Likewise, AT&T also says it may do this if there's a lot of demand on the network once you've hit 22 GB. That translates to about 25 hours of high-definition video in a month. Verizon says it has stopped doing this.

AT&T's move follows T-Mobile's new "Binge On" plan, which lets you stream video without it counting against your data cap from companies T-Mobile has signed up - including DirecTV. As part of that program, T-Mobile automatically degrades the quality of all video you watch to standard definition from HD. That has upset advocates of net neutrality, the concept that all Web traffic should be treated equally.

Image: G

T-Mobile began shaking up wireless industry practices after the government blocked AT&T from acquiring it in 2011, scrapping contract plans to give customers more flexibility, lowering prices and introducing Binge On. In recent years, its share of new users has been growing, according to research from MoffettNathanson. Amid T-Mobile's changes and as more than 90 percent of U.S. adults now has a cellphone, AT&T, Verizon and Sprint have been lowering prices and offering promotions to compete.

Figuring out if AT&T's latest is a good value is a little tricky.

FOR ONE PERSON:

- The unlimited plan with one phone, including a first year of DirecTV, costs at least $110 a month and will rise to at least $140 a month after a year because of the DirecTV promotional price. This does not include fees, taxes or the cost of the phone itself.

- Just getting a phone plan with 5 GB of data would cost you $75 a month, before the cost of the phone, taxes and fees; it's $85, to start, including DirecTV.

FOR TWO PEOPLE:

- The unlimited plan costs at least $150.

- A 5 GB phone plan costs $100; 15 GB costs $130. Adding TV costs at least $10 a month more to start.

Figuring out family finances is more complicated. A family of four would save money with the unlimited plan if they would have opted for a plan with 20 GB, but spend more if they just wanted to share 15 GB.

'OLIVE KITTERIDGE' AUTHOR PUBLISHES NEW NOVEL

"My Name is Lucy Barton" (Random House), by Elizabeth Strout

The narrator of Elizabeth Strout's new novel has a peculiar voice for a twice-married, successful writer and mother of two grown daughters. She sounds like a little girl.

Indeed, readers may wonder at first whether they have inadvertently picked up a novel aimed at young readers. But soon it becomes clear that Lucy Barton is a trauma survivor.

Her family was so poor they lived in a garage for her first 11 years; children in their tiny Illinois farm town taunted her on the playground, "Your family stinks."

Her father was sexually deviant. Her mother, who may have been an abuse victim as well, tells her, as her breasts develop, that she's starting to look like a neighbor's cow.

Lucy understands she didn't have a normal childhood - "that huge pieces of knowledge about the world were missing that can never be replaced" - yet she bristles when anyone else suggests it.

The book is structured as an extended flashback as Lucy recalls a period of her life when, as a young wife and mother, she was hospitalized for nine weeks for a mysterious ailment. Her mother comes to New York to visit her, staying in her hospital room for five days.

During that interlude they gossip about friends and relatives. The mother talks only about the ruined lives and failed marriages of others, incapable of acknowledging the hurt and suffering in her own family. When Lucy wants to discuss why she was locked in the cab of her father's truck with a long brown snake, her mother feigns innocence: "I don't know anything about a truck," she says.

Later, Lucy will write sketches about this visit and show them to another writer, who will tell her that they're very good but that "people will go after you for combining poverty and abuse." What she's actually written, the writer says, is "a story about love."

Well, yes and no. Strout, whose short story collection "Olive Kitteridge" won a Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 2009 and was later made into an HBO miniseries, has written a strange and affecting story about poverty and abuse - and how it's possible for them to co-exist with love.

Online:
http://www.elizabethstrout.com/

POWERFUL REPLACEMENT IN WORKS FOR CLIMATE-MODELING COMPUTER

One of the most powerful computers in the world dedicated to climate change, weather and other earth science research will be replaced in 2017 by an even faster machine, officials announced Monday.

The Yellowstone supercomputer in Wyoming currently ranks among the 60 fastest in the world. The new supercomputer, to be named Cheyenne, will be at least 2 1/2 times more powerful, the National Center for Atmospheric Research said.

Capable of 5.3 quadrillion calculations, or petaflops, per second, Cheyenne will be some 100,000 times faster than a typical home computer. The speed provides unprecedented detail in climate-change predictions, including regional modeling of effects, the center said.

A more powerful computer will allow researchers to see results in higher resolution, like a higher density of pixels sharpens images on a television or a stronger telescope brings a greater number of far-off galaxies into focus, explained Rich Loft, the center's director of technology.

Scientists since 2012 have been using the Yellowstone supercomputer near Cheyenne for a range of research that also includes modeling air pollution and ocean currents.

The atmospheric research center plans to install Cheyenne later this year and put it to work early next year. Questions it might help answer include:

- Is the California drought a fluke or due to global climate change?

- Can scientists predict the intensity of solar flares - streams of radiation released by the sun that can endanger satellites and astronauts - during an upcoming solar cycle?

- How might climate change increase the likelihood of drought and change the extent of arctic sea ice from decade to decade?

The Yellowstone computer, located in a business park a few miles west of Cheyenne, put Wyoming's capital on the map as a potential technology hub. Facilities including a huge Microsoft data center have set up nearby since the center opened.

The old machine won't shut down when the new one boots up. The computers will be side-by-side for much of next year but won't operate in direct coordination.

Time and bandwidth on supercomputers typically gets divvied up among researchers and rarely goes to a single project at a time.

IBM

IBM

"The machine is usually working on dozens of problems at the same time in a kind of mix of jobs that are running on it. Some of those jobs might take a quarter of the machine. Others might take only 1 percent," Loft said.

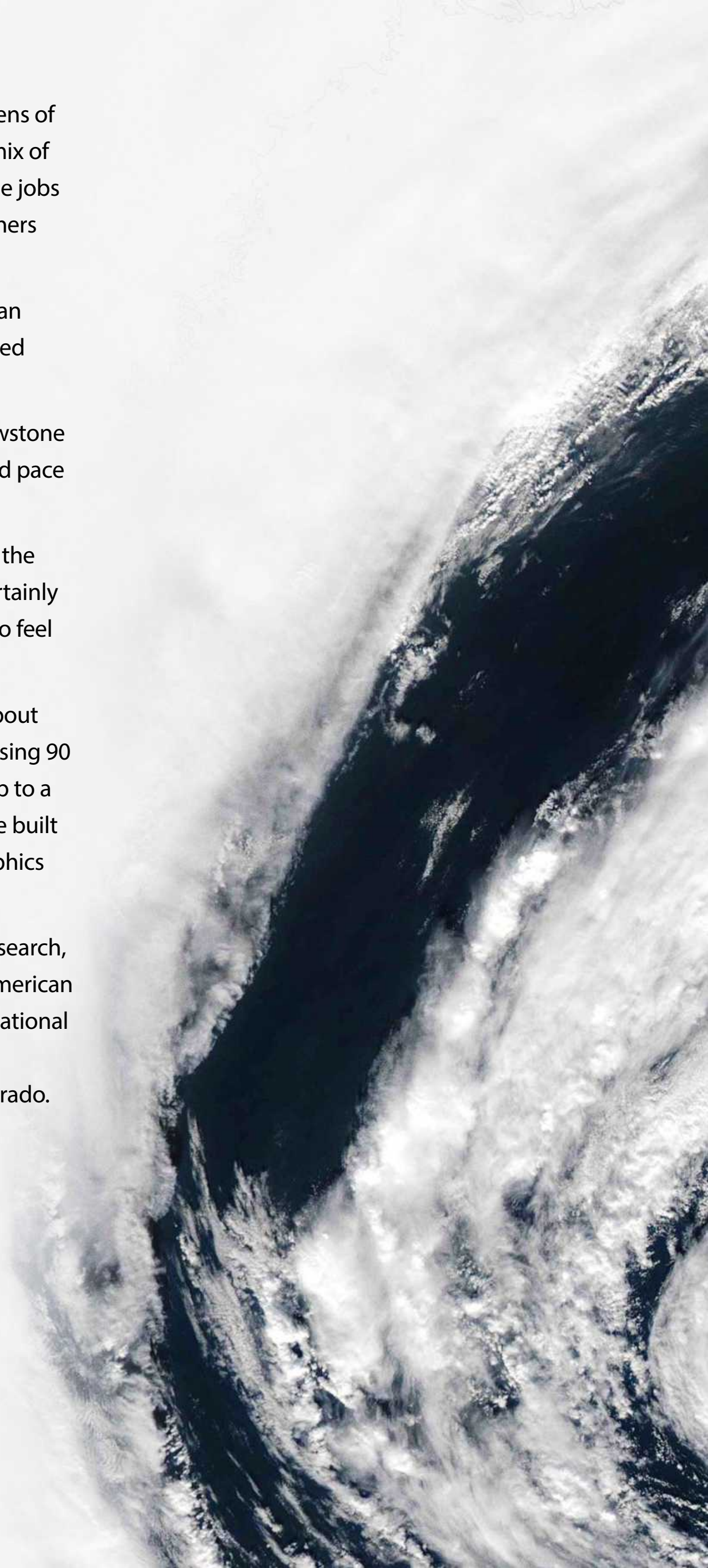
More than 2,200 scientists from more than 300 universities and federal labs have used Yellowstone since 2012.

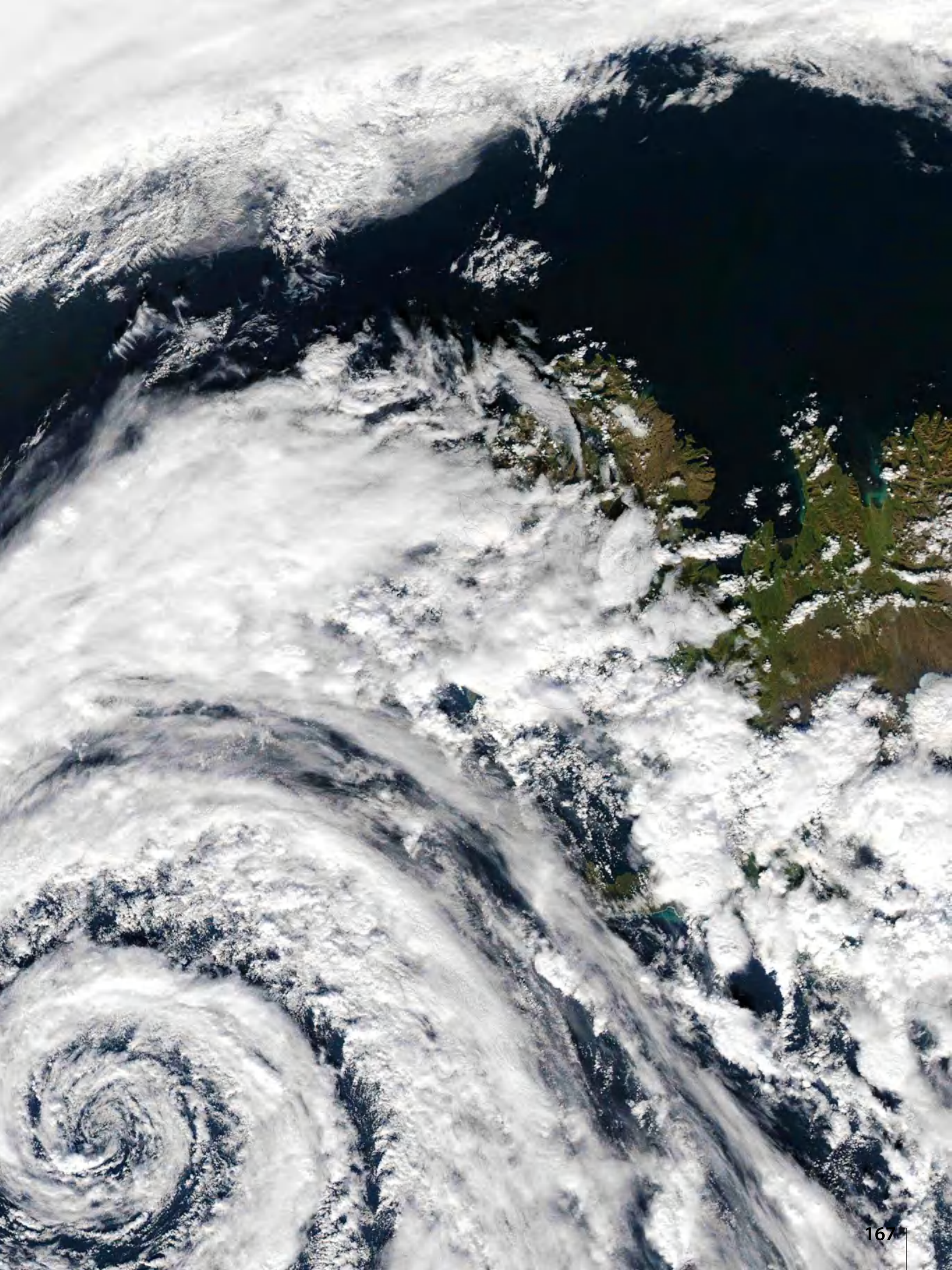
Officials moved to replace the first Yellowstone computer so quickly because of the rapid pace of technology.

"Things get better, faster cheaper. That's the whole story of computers," Loft said. "Certainly you know, if you have a phone, it starts to feel clunky after a few years."

The Cheyenne supercomputer will be about three times as efficient as Yellowstone, using 90 percent as much electricity but taking up to a third as much space. The machine will be built by Milpitas, California-based Silicon Graphics International Corp.

The University Corp. for Atmospheric Research, a consortium of more than 100 North American universities and colleges, oversees the National Center for Atmospheric Research. Both organizations are based in Boulder, Colorado.





SCIENCE

ASTRONAUT PEAKE PAYS TRIBUTE TO 'STARMAN' BOWIE FROM SPACE

Here he is, sitting in a tin can, far above the world - and saying goodbye to David Bowie.

Messages of condolence for the late rock star flowed in Monday from around the world - and from space, where British astronaut Tim Peake tweeted from the International Space Station.

Saddened to hear David Bowie has lost his battle with cancer - his music was an inspiration to many, Peake wrote Monday.

The outer-space tribute seemed fitting. Unique and otherworldly, Bowie often seemed like a creature from another planet, the Starman of one of his 1970s hits.

Image: Marie Schmidt

esa
TIM PEAKE

The cosmos fascinated him from his first big hit, Space Oddity. Released in 1969, the year of the first moon landing, it told the story of Major Tom, an astronaut adrift, sitting in my tin can, far above the world.

The song caught the world's imagination again in 2013 when Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield strummed it on his guitar while orbiting Earth aboard the space station. The video was viewed millions of times, and Bowie gave the rendition his seal of approval, calling it the most poignant version of the song ever created.

Hadfield tweeted Monday Ashes to ashes, dust to stardust. Your brilliance inspired us all. Goodbye Starman.

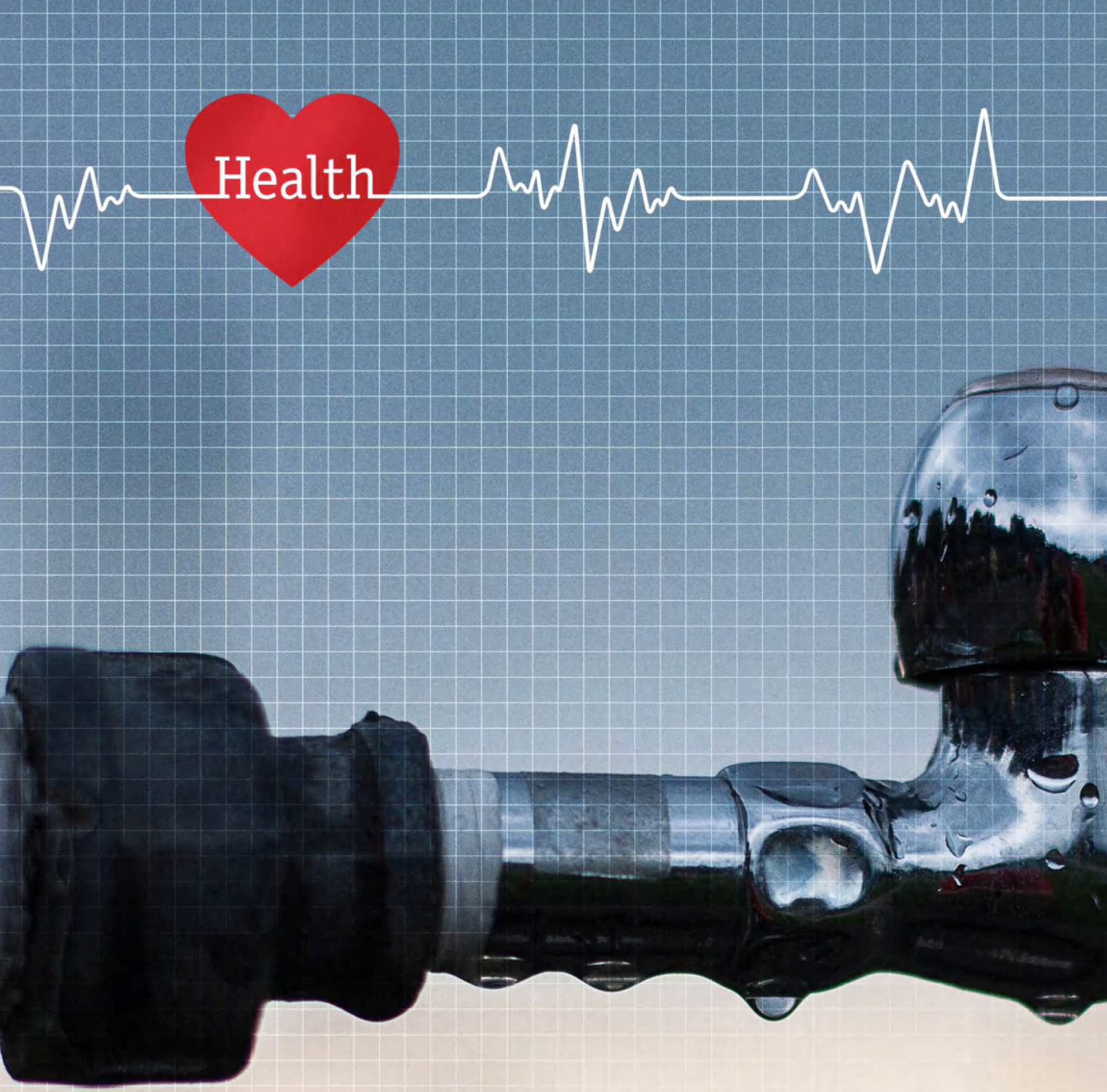
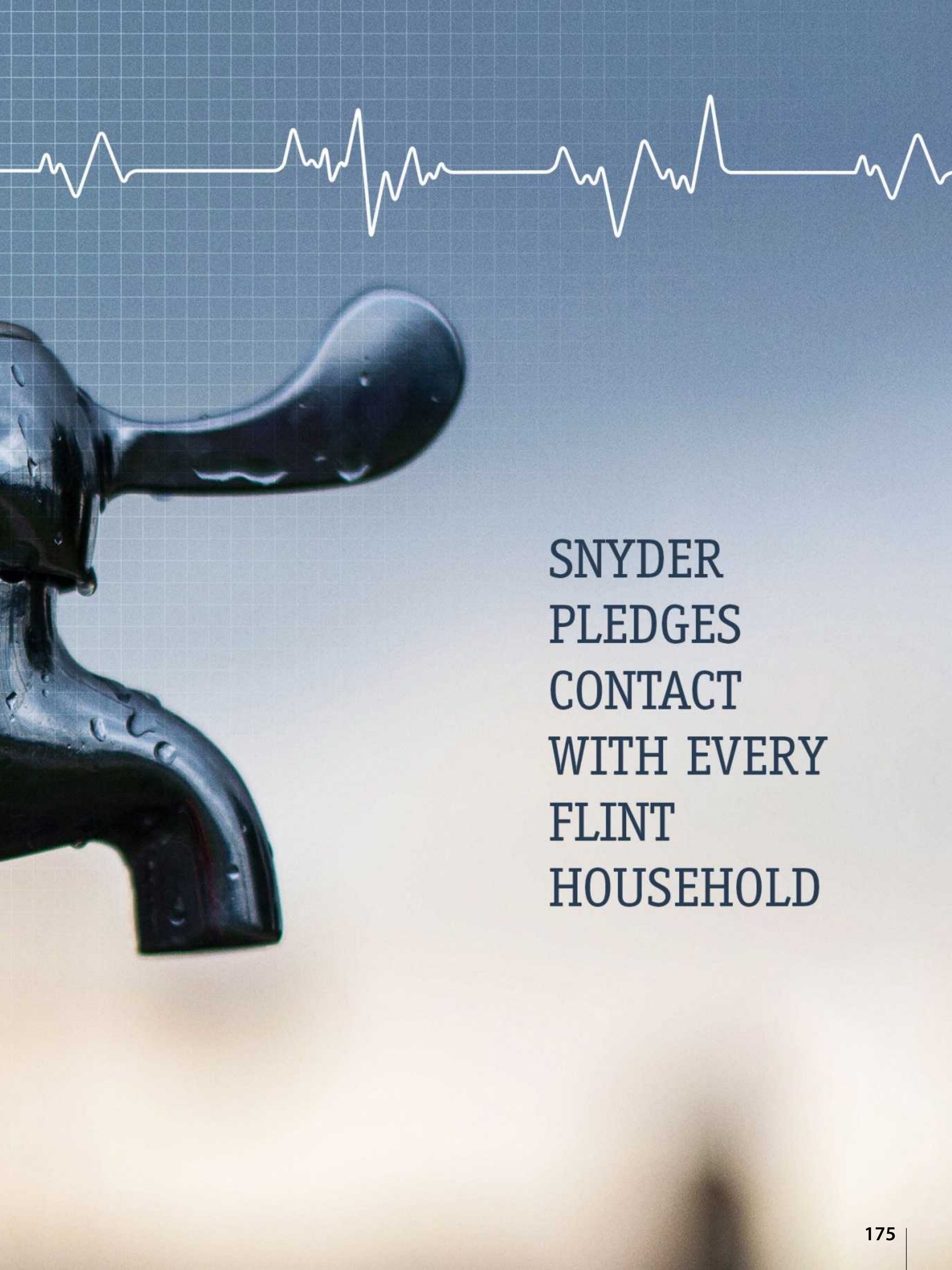


Image: Shenghung Lin



SNYDER PLEDGES CONTACT WITH EVERY FLINT HOUSEHOLD

Image: Sam Owens/AP

An apologetic Gov. Rick Snyder pledged Monday that officials would make contact with every household in Flint to check whether residents have bottled water and a filter and want to be tested for lead exposure while his embattled administration works on a long-term solution to the city's water crisis.

He also said he first clearly knew of Flint's lead problem around Oct. 1, when state health authorities confirmed elevated blood-lead levels in children that were detected by a local doctor. Exposure to lead can cause behavior problems and learning disabilities in children.

"This is a crisis. So we're responding appropriately. There's more work to be done," Snyder said during a news conference with state and local officials in Flint.

It was the Michigan Republican's first visit to the 99,000-resident city since October, when he called for a switch back to Detroit's water after more corrosive Flint River water leached lead from service lines and into homes. Snyder said he may ask lawmakers for additional money for the emergency before his budget proposal in February.

Flint's switched from Detroit's water system to Flint River water in a cost-cutting move in 2014, while under state financial management. That was intended as a temporary step while a pipeline was built from Lake Huron. The city returned to Detroit water in October, but officials remain concerned about the corrosion caused by the Flint River water and began adding corrosion controls last month.

Since October, more than 12,000 filters have been distributed, more than 2,000 blood tests

have been done and more than 700 water tests have been conducted, Snyder said.

"Those actions were not good enough. We've worked hard, but we need to get more connection to the citizens of Flint," Snyder said.

Last week, he declared an emergency after Flint and Genesee County requested financial assistance. The state could ask for federal help at a later date.

Image: Jake May

HOUSE SET TO STRENGTHEN GOVERNMENT RECORDS LAW

The House moved forward on legislation that would make it easier to obtain government records, as a new congressional report concluded that the freedom of information process under the Obama administration is broken and in need of serious change.

The bill, expected to win bipartisan approval Monday evening, would require government agencies to make information available to the public online. It also would require agencies to adopt a presumption in favor of disclosing records rather than keeping them secret.

The vote comes as Republicans on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee released a report asserting that the freedom of information law, enacted 50 years ago, is plagued by a number of problems, including a lack of communication from federal agencies, unreasonable redactions and abusive fees.

Image: Joshua Roberts

Backlogs of Freedom of Information Act requests have more than doubled since President Barack Obama took office in 2009, the report said, and agencies are sitting on thousands of unfulfilled document requests.

"When President Obama took office he promised an 'unprecedented level of openness in government.' This report demonstrates that is not the case," said Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, chairman of the House Oversight panel.

Instead of the promised openness and transparency, "this administration is playing a game of hide the document from the American people," Chaffetz said.

Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland, the top Democrat on the oversight panel, called the GOP report unfair and said committee members were not given a chance to vote on it.

"There is no doubt that the FOIA process can and must be improved," Cummings said, "but issuing this erroneous, incomplete and highly partisan staff report will not help these goals."

While freedom of information requests have soared in recent years, staffing levels have not kept pace, Cummings said. "Unfortunately, Republicans in Congress starved agencies of resources, and then they act surprised that there are backlogs," he said.

The White House said it was examining the legislation to see whether Obama could support it. But spokesman Josh Earnest sharply criticized Congress for exempting itself from the transparency requirement, saying it was not an "American way to pursue this."

"They're writing the rules in such a way that they don't have to play by them," Earnest said.

The oversight report said the State Department was arguably the worst agency with respect to FOIA compliance and said the agency has numerous open requests that are nearly a decade old.

A report by an internal watchdog last week also faulted the State Department, saying the agency produced "inaccurate and incomplete" responses to public records requests while Democratic presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton led the department from 2009 to 2013.

Image: Cliff Owen

The report by the State Department's inspector general criticized the agency for failing to find documents showing Clinton used a private email account for official business and found that personnel responsible for records requests often missed deadlines and didn't meet legal requirements for conducting complete searches.

The bill moving forward in the House would change the presumption that government information is secret to a presumption of openness and modernize the system for processing requests so that agencies provide records online in a publicly accessible format.

Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Calif., one of the bill's co-sponsors, called it a common-sense reform that "gives citizen watchdogs and journalists easier access to information to hold the government accountable."

Cummings, another co-sponsor, said the bill would bring "greater sunlight to federal agency actions," adding that agencies "should have to justify their actions when they want to withhold information from the American people."

The vote comes a year after Congress failed to update the Freedom of Information Act despite bipartisan support in the House and Senate.

Advocates for open government praised the House bill and said they prefer House language to a similar measure being considered in the Senate. The Senate Judiciary Committee has approved a bill sponsored by Sens. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., and John Cornyn, R-Texas, that includes a "presumption of openness" for government records. The bill also seeks to reduce the overuse of exemptions to withhold information from the public.

Image: Susan Walsh

APPARENT RELAXATION OF SECURITY BEFORE DRUG LORD'S RECAPTURE

As the world's most hunted man, Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman had to know the most sophisticated information and surveillance technology available was marshalled against him: satellites, unmanned aircraft, NSA and DEA eavesdroppers, malware-sowing Mexican state hackers.

Yet Guzman may have let his guard down before receiving Hollywood actors Sean Penn and Kate del Castillo three months ago on a remote central Mexico mountaintop in apparent hopes of getting get a biopic made to his liking.

Authorities are not identifying whatever information security missteps may have led to Guzman's being recaptured Friday in a seaside town not far away.

"Whatever mistake or screw-up played a role, presumably the government is going to keep it secret. Because if El Chapo made this mistake others will make it in the future," said Christopher Soghoian, a surveillance expert with the American Civil Liberties Union.

Mike Vigil, a former head of international operations for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, said the Oct. 2 visit likely went undetected because Penn took "extraordinary" measures beforehand, changing disposable phones daily.

Neither actor took electronics to the meeting.

Instead, previously intercepted communications between Del Castillo and Guzman's lawyers were key - authorities knew about the movie plans and were closing on him well before Penn, on assignment for Rolling Stone, accompanied Del Castillo to the meeting she arranged, said Vigil, who was briefed.

Mexico's attorney general, Arely Gomez, said Friday that cartel security had been compromised during contacts between El Chapo's lawyers and "actresses and producers" hoping to make a biopic. She presumably meant Del Castillo, who Penn said was contacted by a Guzman lawyer in 2014 on the matter.

Mexican agencies possess commercial spyware from firms including Hacking Team that could have been used to infect computers or cellphones of people involved. Such programs harvest keystrokes, voice calls, emails and text messages.

Vigil said El Chapo's narrow Oct. 6 escape from a government attempt to capture him in the same mountains where he met with Penn and Del Castillo was not directly related to his meeting with the Hollywood stars. The military was simply tightening the noose, he said.

Penn said he felt he was being watched after arriving in central Mexico for the meeting.

"There is no question in my mind but that the DEA and the Mexican government are tracking our movements," he wrote.

Mexican news media on Monday published images of him and Del Castillo that apparently came from a security camera in Guadalajara.

Penn said he was "bewildered" by El Chapo's willingness to risk the visit and imagined a "weaponized drone" hovering above as he drank tequila with the capo.

The Mexican newspaper El Universal said Monday that a cartel lawyer in September gave Del Castillo a "special phone" presumably used to arrange the visit.

"Can't speak to that," Penn responded curtly when asked via email if he knew of the phone. Penn also reiterated what he said in his article: He did not carry his cellular phone to Mexico from Southern California.

"My comms were not in the mix," he said.

Penn did not address specifics on security measures taken.

In Rolling Stone, he described "labeling TracPhones (burners), one per contact, one per day, destroy, burn, buy, balancing levels of encryption, mirroring through Blackphones, anonymous e-mail addresses, unsent messages accessed in draft form."

He also called himself "the single most technologically illiterate man left standing."

"OPSEC (Operational Security) is not easy even for experts, bringing in a gross amateur like an actor is just insanely reckless," said Nicolas Weaver, a University of California, Berkeley cybersecurity expert.

While Blackphone calls are encrypted, their location and an owner's identity can be determined. Exchanging unsent messages in "draft" folders on email servers was discredited as insecure even before the scandal involving former CIA director David Petraeus.

Most encryption applications don't do much to hide the information known as metadata that shows who is talking to whom and can provide

their physical location, said Matthew Green, a Johns Hopkins cryptographer.

Perhaps the strangest security question in the El Chapo affair is the cartel's use of the Blackberry Messenger application for communications. Experts say it was not designed with security in mind.

"BlackBerry messenger exists in two forms: enterprise servers and the public service, both of which are designed to be wiretapped," said Weaver. It would be easy to tap user accounts if Guzman's cartel was using the public service and law enforcement identified them; if the cartel set up its own servers, cyber-sleuths could easily identify anyone on the network if they penetrated it by, say, confiscating a user's phone.

Penn described in his Rolling Stone article how men driving him to the rendezvous with El Chapo got frequent BBM messages. And he says that after his failed effort to meet the drug lord on Oct. 11 for a formal interview, Del Castillo re-established contact "through a web of BBM devices."

Penn wrote that it was then he received a "credible tip" the DEA knew about his meeting with El Chapo.

The drug lord's uncharacteristically relaxed security as he courted Hollywood strongly indicates that evading capture was not his priority, said Vanda Felbab-Brown, a Brookings Institution analyst.

Rather than opting to get plastic surgery and flee to Venezuela, she said, "he probably made a decision that he's going to go down.

"If his priority was to remain outside prison he never would have accepted these overtures."

PC SALES FALL FOR FOURTH CONSECUTIVE YEAR

The PC industry had another down year in 2015, as global shipments fell for the fourth-consecutive year despite new models and the release of Microsoft's Windows 10 operating system.

Even holiday sales had a limited impact on shipments during the final months of 2015. Analysts at the Gartner research firm estimate manufacturers shipped 288.7 million personal computers in 2015, down 8 percent from 2014.

Gartner says Apple was the only major computer maker to see an increase in global shipments last year, while Lenovo, HP, Dell and Asus all saw declines.

Experts say PC sales are still being hurt by the popularity of smartphones and tablets. And the expected boost from Windows 10 was undercut by Microsoft's decision to give free software upgrades to users of its previous operating system.

DELL
DELL

SAMSUNG

SAMSUNG REACHES PARTIAL AGREEMENT WITH SICK WORKERS

Samsung Electronics reached a partial agreement on workplace safety with sickened workers and their families, nearly a decade after the death of a 22-year-old chip worker from leukemia galvanized concern about conditions in South Korea's semiconductor industry.

The South Korean company and Banolim, which is the main advocacy group for sick workers, along with another group representing workers signed an agreement Tuesday to establish an external committee that will have oversight of safety at Samsung.

Its mandate includes measures such as ensuring Samsung preserves information related to workers' health and conducting spot checks of chemicals used in its manufacturing. If any hazardous substances are detected during random checks, the company's health management team will order their use stopped, according to the agreement.

Samsung also agreed to give workers access to information related to their health and safety when they apply for government insurance covering occupational diseases. Workers and their lawyers have complained that Samsung denied access to key information on health and safety, citing confidentiality.

Baek Suhyeon, Samsung's top negotiator, said the agreement was "meaningful." Hwang Sang-gi, the founder of Banolim, said the measures were "significantly inadequate" but the group concluded the talks on preventive measures because negotiations had become too time-consuming. The group vowed to continue its protests and urged Samsung to resume talks on compensation.

The external committee will examine workplace conditions that affect workers' health and safety at Samsung, such as management of chemicals. The committee can also make recommendations to Samsung on its disclosure of chemical hazards and the company's standards on trade secrets. Workers have complained that trade secrets meant they were denied information about chemicals that may have affected their health.

Paek Domyung, a professor of occupational medicine at Seoul National University who was part of the three member panel that mediated between Samsung and workers, said the agreement laid out a system to put Samsung under external oversight. But the company's capacity to prevent illnesses and improve safety depends on the commitment of its top executives, he said.

Remember
Hwang Yumi
Died from Leukemia
at the age of 22
after working in
Samsung Semiconductor

The agreement, which is not legally binding, is the first of its kind between Samsung and Banolim since the death of 22-year-old chip worker Hwang Yu-mi from leukemia in 2007 ignited public debate about safety at Samsung factories and South Korea's semiconductor industry in general.

Samsung and Banolim are still deadlocked over other areas, mainly compensation for Samsung workers who became seriously ill allegedly due to exposure to carcinogens at its chip and LCD factories.

Last year, Samsung rejected the mediator's recommendations that an independent organization oversee compensation. Instead, the company launched its own committee whose members were selected by Samsung. Many workers and their families denounced Samsung's compensation measures, which they said were unilateral and veiled in secrecy.

Samsung said more than 150 individuals applied for compensation and more than 100 of them accepted its financial support. It said the rest are still in talks and it is still receiving applications for financial support even though the initially announced deadline has passed. The company refused to disclose how much of its 100 billion won ($85.8 million) fund allocated for compensation was used to compensate workers.

More than 200 current or former Samsung workers suffering from grave illnesses have contacted or sought help from Banolim. Of them, 76 died, Banolim said. Many had cancers such as leukemia and were aged in their 20s or 30s. The oldest cases date to the 1980s but most are from the 1990s and 2000s.

Image: Lee Jin-man

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